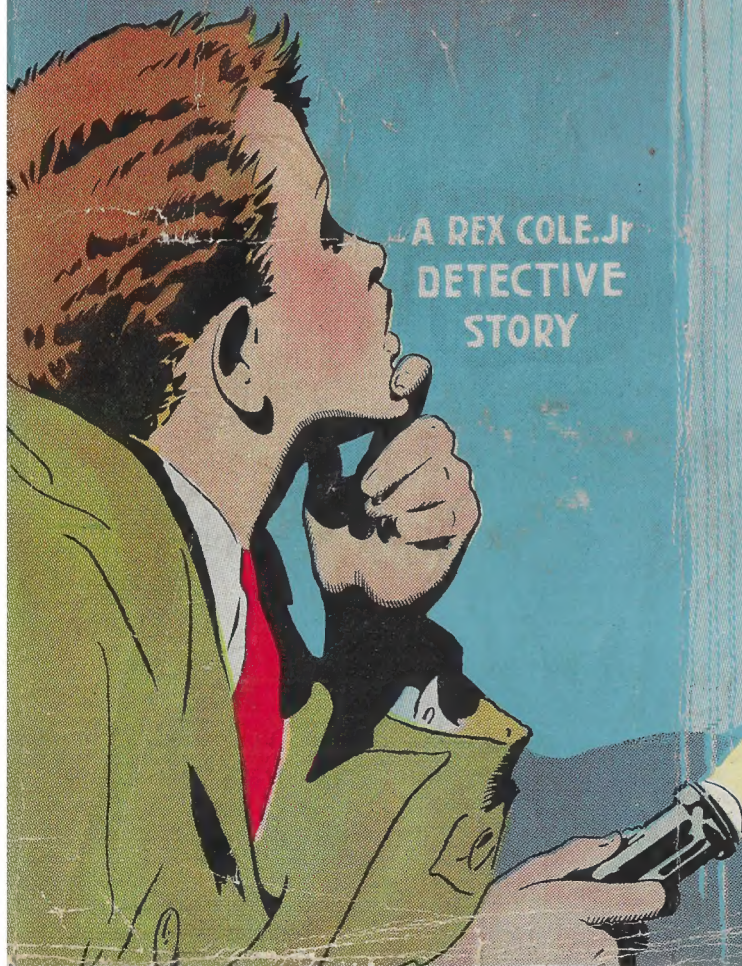


# REX COLE, Jr.

## AND THE GRINNING GHOST

GORDON CHAPMAN

A REX COLE, Jr.  
DETECTIVE  
STORY



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**REX COLE, JUNIOR AND  
THE GRINNING GHOST**

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**AND THE**  
**GRINNING GHOST**

*By*  
**GORDON CHAPMAN**



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# REX COLE, JR., AND THE GRINNING GHOST

## CHAPTER I

### AN UNUSUAL MISSION

FIVE faces were vaguely visible in the soft, intimate glow shed by two candles, silver mounted and placed effectively at opposite ends of the dinner table. The faces were those of Mayor Cole, his son, Rex, Jr., and three guests. The table, richly gleaming with silverware and polished glass, stood in the center of the huge dining room in the Mayor's sedate home, while without, the city of Hilton, Illinois, shuddered beneath the icy blasts that hurried down from the North. It was late February, cold, windy, and cheerless. The five seated about the table could distinguish the whistling of the wind in the streets above other city noises, but were too engrossed in an excellent dinner to give it much thought.



Here, comfortably ensconced in great chairs, enjoying the intimacy induced by the candle-light, eating excellent food perfectly served, they could not be expected to waste much time in consideration of the fury that boomed and whistled outside. All was serene among them, and this peace shone brightly in their faces, and was noticeable in their chatter.

At the head of the table sat Mayor Cole, handsome, forceful, imposing. Despite his grey hair he seemed a young man. There was a sparkle in his eye, a lilt to his voice that belied his age. He could gaze directly across the table at his son, his own image from which the traces of time had been erased. Rex junior, was indeed the picture of his father. His steel grey eyes had the Cole clarity; his straight, aquiline nose the Cole dominance; his mouth and chin the Cole strength. Even in the curliness of his chestnut hair did he resemble the older man, for the Mayor's grey head had once been dark and still retained the curl of its youth. The Mayor's pride in his son was evident in the appraising glances that he shot toward the youth from time to time. And this pride was not without



justification. Few men could claim for their sons the qualities that young Rex had convincingly demonstrated of late. Although the famous "Crystal Clue" affair had become a memory for most of the Hilton population, it lingered forcibly in the minds of the Mayor and the others present at dinner.<sup>1</sup> That had been Rex's first venture in the field of criminal investigation, but the success he had met with marked him as a youth of great ability and initiative. That success had penetrated to the ears of so important an organization as the famed Criminal Investigation Department of the British Empire, with headquarters at Scotland Yard, London. There the old friend of the Mayor, Inspector John MacAndrews, had learned of the prowess of Rex, and had written to the Mayor concerning a voyage that he, the Inspector, was about to make to the Orient via the United States. Hence one of the guests at the dinner was the lanky, moustached, taciturn individual known throughout the world as one of the moving forces in Scotland Yard.

The Inspector was seated at the Mayor's

<sup>1</sup>Rex Cole, Jr., and the Crystal Clue

right. Below him sat a young man of fair complexion and sandy hair, dressed in the loose tweeds that seem to symbolize all England to the average American. He was the Inspector's mysterious traveling companion, who had been introduced as plain "George Evans." Possibly there would have been no mystery about this young fellow had it not been for the Inspector's letter which had intimated that his companion was traveling incognito. In all, the young Briton was a likable sort, and Rex had taken to him immediately. "Evans" was a bit older than his newly found American friend, but the difference in their ages was largely eliminated by Rex's mature and seasoned attitude. Both of them had already discovered a mutual admiration for athletics, and their present chat was devoted to the contrasting merits of football as played in the two countries.

Opposite "George Evans" sat Rex's fat chum, "Butterball" Thomas. The chubby lad was Rex's greatest intimate, and the two had worked hand in hand during the thrilling episodes that had accompanied the "Crystal Clue" affair. Butterball was enormous

and possessed of an unfortunate tendency to break things. Every gesture of his spelt danger, and this had been the source of much amusement (to say nothing of expense) to many of his friends. With all his physical handicaps, he was bright and clever. Since he and Rex had left high school, he had been reporting for the Hilton "Call," and it had been his typewriter that had tapped out the momentous "scoop" that followed the closing scenes of the "Crystal Clue." Because of this work he had been assigned to cover the trip which Rex, "George Evans," and Inspector MacAndrews was about to make to the Far East.

That the Inspector had been anxious to have Rex accompany him was plainly evident both from his letter and from his conversation that day, the day of his arrival. He had explained to the Mayor that the trip, in all probability, would prove a pleasure jaunt and he was certain that Rex would profit by his visit to these strange lands. He had also become enthusiastic about the presence of Butterball, and seemed pleased that he would have the company of three likable lads. He

had hinted darkly that the trip would assume the aspect of a personally conducted tour, and had said that this was the impression he wished to create. The Mayor and Rex had wondered why it was necessary to create an impression, but had reserved their questioning, for the Inspector had promised to enlighten them that evening after dinner.

Small talk flourished for the better part of the meal, and no one spoke of the impending trip. Strewth, the Cole butler, whom the Mayor had stolen from MacAndrews during a visit to London, seemed greatly pleased to see his former master. "It's like old times, sir, this is," he had said to MacAndrews, and smiled one of his rare, twisted smiles. Strewth was the perfect butler, and even now the Inspector was haranguing his old friend, the Mayor, about the dastardly theft of this impeccable servant.

"By Jove," the lank Englishman said, "I'm rather inclined to coax Strewth away from you, you old pirate. How I ever came to sacrifice him in the first place is beyond me. I haven't had a decent butler since."

The Mayor laughed. "Try and get him,"

he said. "Strewth wouldn't leave me for one thing, and for another I might add that I'd see you hanged before I'd allow him to return to England with you."

"George" and the other two boys had been listening to this bit of conversation, while the subject of it all hovered diligently in the background looking as pleased as he possibly could. He knew that he would never leave the Mayor, but still he thought tenderly of his native soil, and of his old master.

He served the coffee and passed cigars to the Inspector and the Mayor. Then he retired from the room, leaving the five diners to conclude the meal alone.

"Well, John, it's good to see your homely face again," the Mayor grinned.

"You're no blooming rose, yourself," MacAndrews answered, and seemed pleased at what he thought was an adept use of American slang. "I suppose you are all on edge to hear the reason for my visit?" he asked, puffing gently on his cigar. Every one, save Evans, replied in the affirmative. The Inspector meditated for a while, then said:

"We'll go into the library shortly, and make

ourselves comfortable, for it's a long story. But before we even start I must have the word of each of you that nothing shall pass your lips concerning what I shall tell you."

Each nodded in turn, and the Inspector having finished his coffee (as did the others) suggested that they adjourn to the library. Quietly they filed out of the dining room, and in at least three hearts there was considerable palpitation occasioned by the mysterious promise that had been exacted from them. They proceeded to seat themselves comfortably in the mannish library, while the Inspector carefully closed the double doors that led to the hallway, and then shut and locked each window. Only one of these had been open, and that only a trifle, but the Inspector seemed particular that they should all be locked. Finally he, too, took a seat, and the others prepared to listen. There was much charm in the tall Englishman's mode of speech. Especially did the American lads enjoy his clipped Oxford accent that made his speech rather musical to their ears.

"Before telling you of the events that preceded this journey of ours, I want to present

Lord George Grandon Berkely, whose titles are too numerous for me to list now." He smiled at the astonishment that greeted this announcement, and "George Evans" blushed to the roots. "That's my name," he said, "but really it means nothing, you know, just a bit of show that I inherited from my older brother upon his death last year. I can't even get used to being addressed as 'M' Lord' or some such nonsense. Call me George or Berkely and I'm happy."

MacAndrews silenced any further talk with his hand uplifted, and then began his tale. Because of its important bearing on the future of all concerned it is necessary to set down the Inspector's words verbatim. As he talked, the atmosphere of mystery and adventure that had surrounded Rex and Butterball during the investigation of the "Crystal Clue" returned with full force. Even Lord Berkely, to whom the story was an old affair, seemed to hang on the words of his friend.

"Rightly," the Inspector began, "the tale begins in India about seventy-five years ago. India, then as now, was seething with sedition in various outlying corners. England was



having difficulty in controlling the native population, especially in the small native principalities far to the North in the foothills of the Himalayas. Not only did the Government have to do with a national sentiment, but it had to deal with a religious fervor that was surpassed in no part of the globe. In particular had it been worried by the activities of the worshippers of Kal, a sort of minor prophet and yogi of ancient times who had developed an offshoot of Buddhism in the Northern districts. Kal was represented by an enormous image and enshrined in a far off mountain temple. In a way he was considered similar to the great Juggernaut, the idol worshipped by all of India's horde of devout Brahmins.

"Kal," the Inspector continued, "was seldom seen by a white man. He was embodied in this great figure carved from some strange wood, and scintillated with precious gems. A bevy of priests kept constant watch over the idol, lest some one steal the valuable stones that encrusted the figure.

"Most important of all the stones were two enormous rubies set in either cheek of Kal's

huge face. Both were shaped like tear drops oddly enough, although one was a trifle larger than the other. These rubies were called by the natives the 'Tears of Kal' or, more usually, the 'Tears of Blood.' Needless to say, they had a significance far greater than any of the other gems. One of the few white men to view them said that they were undoubtedly the largest in the world. It was impossible to estimate their value.

"Seventy-five years ago a white man, exploring the then unknown wastes of northern India, came upon the temple of Kal and gained admittance. He viewed the rubies, and from then on never ceased in his efforts to acquire one or both. Money was refused by the priests, in fact all of this man's overtures were rejected. His mind refused to be drawn from the stones. At any cost he must have them, and eventually he got one of them. No one knows exactly how he got it, but it is definitely known that the ruby was stolen. Probably he drugged the priests and then hacked out the gem from Kal's cheek. He then managed to escape from India, after many exciting adventures. The protection

which he had from other British subjects was practically useless against the subtle activities of the enraged priests of Kal, but somehow he returned safely to England and then presented the stone to the British Museum. Of course the theft of the ruby served to infuriate the natives of that section of the country, and since then they have made it practically impossible for a white man to traverse their lands. English rule is non-existent, and many British subjects have been mercilessly slaughtered. The Museum has inconsiderately refused to restore the stone, and the Indians have taken revenge as I told you.

"At the present time," he continued quickly, "there exists throughout India a state of unrest that is a bane to the Empire. Not only have Gandhi and his followers created a virtual revolution, but other forces have stirred up the fringes of the land into violent reaction. The inhabitants of the Northern states, most of whom worship Kal, are fierce and unrelenting. They do not come out in the open in their warfare, but resort to mysterious methods of killing and maiming that cannot be counter attacked. The Gov-

ernment has never been able to fasten a crime upon any individual.

"The ruby continued to rest in the Museum, carefully guarded, and never advertised. There are plenty of people who know it as the largest ruby in the world, but very few know its history.

"Recently the Indian government petitioned to have the ruby restored to the temple. They hoped in this manner to appease to a certain extent the ferocity of the Kal worshippers. The matter went to various Secretaries and officers who consider such requests, and at last it was decided to return the stone to India."

MacAndrews paused for a moment and looked about him. The only lighted lamp in the room stood upon the library table and it only partially revealed the faces of his audience. From what he could see, it was evident that the three Americans were absorbed in the drift of his tale. He started afresh.

"When this decision was made, it immediately produced a series of disadvantageous conditions. There was the fact that the moment it was learned that the stone was to

leave the Museum, various organizations of criminals might make attempts to gain possession of it. Besides this, there was the more important fact that those forces at work to complete the revolution threatening in India would make every possible effort to prevent the return of the stone. These forces were composed largely of Indian native politicians, but there were also many whites who favored their views. With such situations as these to deal with, it was obvious that something had to be done to cover up the removal of the ruby as well as its transport to the Orient. For purposes purely psychological it was determined that the stone must reach India in time for a festival that marks the birthday of Kal, and that the presentation must be very elaborate.

“That decision brings me into the picture. I was called upon to effect the safe return of the ruby to India. Naturally such a mission is more diplomatic than criminal, but I agreed to help out, largely because I felt that the greatest hazard lay in the danger of theft by some gang or lone robber. Some of them have ways of discovering the most secret ac-

tivities of the Government, and I soon found out that news had leaked out that the ruby was to be restored.

“My first action was to have an almost perfect duplicate of the stone fashioned by an expert in London. This was done secretly, and to the best of my knowledge is not known to any one save myself, the jewel expert, and one member of the Home Office, who assisted in the substitution. We removed the real ruby and placed the imitation in the case reserved for it. This worked smoothly. Then it was necessary to cover up my departure, and we let it be known that I had gone to the South of France for an extended vacation. I slipped out of London and actually went toward my supposed destination. On the way I altered my appearance and returned to London to pick up the gem, as well as Lord Berkely, who had also been disguised. We managed to look the part of a couple of English tourists, and as such we journeyed to New York. In order to prevent a possible follower tracing us we dawdled about in New York, seeing the sights and moving about from one hotel to another. As a last bit of self-protec-

tion we visited a pre-arranged house party in Westchester and remained hidden for a time. At length we entrained for Hilton to pick up Rex and Mr. Thomas. Now you know why I want them to go with us. It will look like a tour of sorts for young boys, or rather young gentlemen. In a few days we will leave for Chicago and thence to San Francisco. There we will take the ship for Japan, and from Japan travel slowly to India via the coast as far as Singapore. From Singapore we shall head up through India toward the temple of Kal.

"Now," he said with amusement, "there remains to explain the presence of Lord Berkely. My friends, Lord Berkely's grandfather was the man who stole the 'Tear of Blood.'"

A shocked silence followed this announcement, while the Inspector continued to smile, as did Lord Berkely.

Then Butterball asked a question:

"Tell me, sir, are you positive that you haven't been followed?"

"Yes," the elderly Englishman replied, "I'm sure of it."



It seemed to Rex that the Inspector was speaking a bit louder than usual, but he forgot this thought in a moment. He, too, had a question to place before the man.

"Who do you think would be most likely to go after the stone, that is, what type of crook?"

The Mayor laughed. That was Rex all over. The minute a possible crime came to notice he was off in a cloud of speculation. The Inspector's answer did not surprise him, but it did the others.

"American," he had said laconically, and Rex nodded. He knew the far reach and peculiar tenacity of the American gangster. He knew . . . and he hated. He would have liked to wipe out crime throughout the country, as it had been wiped out in Hilton by his father. His interest in this was almost fanatic, and yet it was a healthy interest for a young boy who had preferred to remain at his father's side rather than attend a university or college.

But the now grave MacAndrews was continuing.

"We must also fear the Indian natives,

some of whom are now in England, for they are even cleverer than Americans when it comes to this sort of thing. They have their actions grounded in mysticism, and believe that there are heavenly rewards for their underhand acts, provided these acts are religious in purpose. Then, too, they are ardent politicians and have no scruples when the political health of India is at stake."

They all nodded, for the papers had been full of information such as the Inspector had related. For a moment the room was quiet. In the rear of the house they could hear faint sounds. Strewth and the cook clearing up for the night, no doubt.

The Inspector had risen to his feet and was reaching inside his vest for something. The smile on his lean features had returned, and seemed even broader as he drew a small, pale yellow chamois bag from his pocket. He held it dangling by a silken cord tied around the neck of the bag. The others were gazing at it with marked fascination for it was obvious what it contained. Rex, somehow, felt that this was an unnecessary action, but refrained from saying so.

The string that held the bag shut was loosened and then the Inspector slipped its contents out upon the table. Only one object slid from the soft leather      The Ruby!

## CHAPTER II

### THE CRIMSON TEAR

THE huge ruby seemed almost alive as it glowed darkly in the light of the table lamp. Against the golden square of cloth that draped the table it resembled a great, gory drop of fresh blood, and those who gazed fascinated at it thought strangely of the tale of horror which Inspector MacAndrews had just related. Neither Rex nor Butterball, nor yet the Mayor had ever seen a stone as large or as perfect as this lovely, if evil, gem. No wonder that native worshippers had called it the "Tear of Blood," for its shape was plausibly that of a gigantic teardrop. Despite its beauty, each of the three who saw it for the first time, suppressed a shudder. How many lives had been sacrificed because of its irresistible lure! How many wild, half-crazy Hindu priests would kill, maim, and torture in order to restore it to the sacred image of Kal! It

was terrible to think of all this. MacAndrews broke the silence.

"There it is," he chuckled, "the blasted bit of rock that is the cause of our journey. Quite extraordinary, don't you think, and worth all of three million pounds. Of course, if it were ever cut up, as it would have to be in order to be sold, it would suffer in value. But as it is there, it's the largest ruby in existence and consequently more valuable because of its rarity of size."

"I'm surprised that you can be so calm, John, with a thing like that on your person all the time," the Mayor said, unable to avert his eyes from the flashing jewel.

"I may not be as calm as I look," was the reply, "but I feel quite safe. No one save you gentlemen and one member of the British Foreign Office knows that the famous ruby has left the Royal Museum. Y'see, the reason they picked on me for this particular voyage was that I am more skilled in the art of concealing identity than any other man in the service of the King. I say that in all modesty." Then the lank detective smiled. "You wouldn't have recognized me in New

York, my dear Cole, nor would his own mother have been able to identify Mr. er-er-'Smith.' We took great pains at the outset of this adventure, and no one has yet discovered where we are. Of that I am certain. And, by Jove, I'm glad of that."

The others sympathized with him. If what he said was true, that a number of different forces had set their hearts upon retrieving that gem, there was every reason for him to be overjoyed that he had up to this time escaped detection.

"You didn't think it necessary to appear in Hilton in disguise, did you, Inspector?" Rex asked.

"No, we resumed our own identities a short distance from New York. I don't believe that anybody would bother searching for us in the very heart of the States. If they're looking any place, it would be in Canada."

For a few moments silence again shrouded the room. Even MacAndrews felt drawn to the ruby that continued to reflect in blood red rays the soft light of the table lamp. To Rex and the Mayor the oddity of the situation was peculiarly appealing. Here, under their

humble roof in the small city of Hilton, rested the world's largest ruby. It was incredible, unbelievable, startling beyond words. To Butterball it signified a tremendous item of genuine news value. A front page "scoop," if he could only use it. But his word must remain inviolate, for it might mean the loss of a human life were he to break his vow of silence. He, too, stared blankly at the ruby. What powerful magic this "Tear of Blood" exercised upon those who viewed it! And this quiet home setting made the spell still more potent. They continued to study the stone, and then then the weird thing happened!

Every light in the room went out. Not a glimmer of light could be seen anywhere. The occupants of that spellbound chamber were too startled to move. Only MacAndrews made a motion toward the table. No one could see any one else. They were stupefied, frightened, speechless. Before this shock had been dissipated, another one occurred. They could feel a faint breeze eddying through the room. *Some one had opened the door!* No sound could be heard save the forced breathing of the



five in the room. *Or were there six?* Somehow the Inspector found his voice.

"What is it?" he cried. And suddenly, as if in answer, there materialized before their eyes a hideous, green, leering, masklike face that seemed to float about six feet above the floor! A face . . . and nothing more! It was strangely luminescent, strangely glowing in a horrible green vapor. The ghastly features were fixed in an evil, ghostly grin. The eyes were nothing but black sockets, the nose a crumbled ruin, the mouth a toothless slit. Nothing more was visible—no body, no legs, no arms. It was awful.

The five in the room were petrified, stony, immovable. They could not even imagine how this grinning, ghostly mask hung there in the room. It wavered as though blown by a breeze, and then moved slowly toward them. The disgusting, wasted features seemed to grow larger. A few feet from where they stood it halted, and a deep, resonant voice issued from between the unmoving lips. It sounded guttural and foreign.

**"ONE MOVEMENT MEANS DEATH!"**

Far back in the eyesockets there seemed to burn a tiny flame. Again the face advanced, again it stopped, and then again it moved, this time backward. Rex had gasped. He had noted that in one cheek there appeared a splash of red, in the other, none.

The face continued to retreat, as they watched it awe-struck. Then, in a flash, it vanished, nothing but a draught of cold air remained.

The Mayor called, "Strewth," but received no answer. Meanwhile Rex raced to the door and switched on the lights. His companions were standing around in a daze, all save the great Inspector MacAndrews. That gentleman was oddly quiet, and then he burst into a long, resounding laugh. "Fancy that," he wailed; "just fancy that."

The three boys had rushed out of the front door, but a hasty glance up and down the street revealed nothing. Then they hurried to the rear of the house, and a sorry sight met their eyes in the kitchen. Strewth and the cook lay bound and gagged upon the floor. After they were released the cook promptly had hysterics and Butterball picked her up

bodily and held her head under a water tap. Strewth was too excited to speak at first, but calmed down sufficiently to tell them that he did not know what had happened. He had smelt something "funny" and then became unconscious. Upon awakening he had found himself bound and gagged, and the cook as well.

The cook, in the meantime, had recovered under the severe dousing, and the boys looked around the room to see what had caused that smell. They soon found a small tube leading in between a window sill and casement. Outside a tiny bulb of rubber was attached to the end of the tube, and upon examination, was discovered to retain still a faint, sickly odor. It was some strange gas. What it was did not matter.

The boys consoled the two servants and then returned to the library. They found the Mayor and Inspector MacAndrews enjoying a hearty laugh. No ruby shone upon the table.

"It's gone," Rex cried.

"Yes," the Inspector said quietly, but without anger.

"Did that thing take it?" Butterball wanted to know.

"Yes," said the Inspector again.

"Can we get it back?" inquired the distraught Lord Berkely.

"No."

"Then what can we do?"

"Nothing."

Then the three boys realized that the Inspector had something up his sleeve. He watched them gravely as they, in turn, waited for him to say something. But he did not speak.

The Mayor, however, broke the silence.

"How did you like our friend Kal?" he asked.

Lord Berkely immediately forgot the jewel and wanted to know what the thing actually was. "It's not possible to believe that it was something supernatural, now that you think of it," he said.

"A touch of drama, and effective drama," the Inspector said. "In fact, I believe it was a kind of theatrical hoax. There was certainly a man in this room, although we could see only that mask of Kal."

"Must have been an Indian," Rex hazarded. He really didn't think so, but was anxious to have the opinion of the others. MacAndrews shook his head. "I don't believe it was," he averred, "although it was evident that old Kally wanted us to think so. That's just the reason I don't."

"Who then?" the Mayor asked.

"That I can't say. What I would really like to know is how our present location was discovered. We took such careful precautions. Some one must be acquainted with our every movement."

Rex was still thinking of the tremendous effect that the queer apparition had had upon them all, that is, all save the Inspector, and now his father. He glanced at the empty yellow bag upon the table, and again thought that the two men did not seem terribly crest-fallen now that the ruby had been taken from them.

The redoubtable MacAndrews seemed to divine what was passing through the lad's head. "Don't worry about the ruby," he said kindly, "we can always get another one." Whereupon he reached in his coat pocket and

then held out something in the palm of his hand for inspection. Perhaps a half dozen "rubies" gleamed in the light!

"Imitations," he explained. "And that should indicate to you that we have taken every precaution. I'll admit that I didn't expect old Kal himself to toddle in here, but I did think that if we had been followed, the follower would make some move to acquire the stone quickly. The setting was perfect, and so he acted. If the vanished spirit was an Indian, we ought to feel safe, for he wouldn't think of the possibility that his precious 'Tear' might be a bit of fused glass. But if it was a clever thief—a white—he'll soon find that he's made a mistake and come back for more. We can't hope to keep feeding him these glass jewels, but we may be able to fix him some other way. The next time that Mr. Kal sticks his beano before me I'll treat him to a remarkable exhibition of accurate shooting."

The boys, upon learning that the ruby had not left the older man's possession, were greatly relieved. Rex understood now the clever move of the Scotland Yard operative.

The loud talk and ostentatious display of the gem was all explained satisfactorily. He wondered how they might discover the grinning ghost's identity. Probably an American, although the voice had sounded foreign. Still that might have been affected, a marble in the mouth would have done the trick.

Rex told the older men about Strewth and the cook, and how those two had been rendered incapable of action. John MacAndrews seemed interested in this, for the use of gas was a clever move and a thing not to be taken lightly.

"There's a good man behind all this," he said, "whether he's Indian or a white."

Every one, including the Mayor and Lord Berkely, was curious as to the actual location of the true ruby, but all forbore asking the Inspector. It seemed as though he wished to keep this to himself, and made no mention of the hiding place. They all took it for granted that the ruby was somewhere on his person.

The five again resumed their seats in the library. Strewth and the cook had been cautioned to forget about the incident in the



kitchen, so far at least as the other servants or outsiders might be concerned. Strewth, in fact, was almost smiling again. Perhaps the incident had brought back memories of days gone by, days when he had served (and possibly participated in the spirited activities of) John MacAndrews.

Serenity reigned again in the library. Both Lord Berkely (now called plain George) and MacAndrews vetoed the Mayor's suggestion that they call Sergeant Jim Hallowell and have him conduct an investigation. As the doughty Englishman said: "There's no use in calling in your police for a chappy who can do a disappearing act on your very doorstep. We'll let him rest secure, and if he comes back or follows us again, we'll manage to nab him."

A worried look had crossed the Mayor's face. Something was bothering him, and he was quick to admit it.

"Look here," he said, "don't you think it's a bit dangerous taking these boys on this trip?"

The boys and MacAndrews pooh-poohed this fear.

"They can't come to any harm, my dear Cole, because as long as we are living the forces anxious to acquire the stone have a chance, but they don't know just who has the stone, or where, and they can't take the risk of doing us harm until they discover what they want to know, and that, I assure you, will be impossible."

The ring of sincerity in the man's voice convinced the Mayor. He offered no further objection, and the congenial group in the library discussed the coming adventure. George, it appeared, was genuinely keen on his companions. He spoke but little, choosing to listen. The odd ejaculations of his American friends amused him, and occasionally he would laugh aloud, or utter a casual "Bully," "Righto" or "Fancy."

They were to leave in two days for Chicago. No stop would be made in that city. Instead they would head directly for San Francisco, where they would remain another two days before sailing time. Rex suggested that on the morrow they wire ahead for reservations on the boat, rather than wait until they reached Chicago. The boat which they were

to take to Yokohama, Japan's principal seaport, was the *Empress of Japan*, one of the largest two Japanese steamships. The four travelers-to-be looked forward with zest to the trip on this majestic liner. They could not be expected to guess that the greatest adventure of their collective lives would befall them while aboard the boat. Nor could they guess that it would be Rex, the novice, who would prove to be the guiding light in the amazing tangle that followed.

## CHAPTER III

### REX EARLY ON THE JOB

THE two days that followed were marked by a quiet serenity that did much to relieve the tension created by the horrible spectre which had appeared in the Cole library. Rex and the Mayor, together with Butterball, took delight in an extensive tour of Hilton, during which they displayed the attractions that were manifest in that city. The visitors from England were charmed by the perfection that existed in the miniature metropolis. They compared it favorably with some of the smaller cities in their native land and in Germany, famed for its cleanliness and beauty. Although they continued to speak of the strange adventure with the Grinning Ghost (Butterball had named it with true newspaper vision) they now regarded it as a thing of the past, and since there had been no repetition of the appearance, felt confident that the un-

known thief had left Hilton. This was no doubt true, although once while Rex and his friends were walking through one of the chief thoroughfares he had experienced a peculiar sensation that they were being followed. A quick turn had resulted in nothing but the sight of a number of "window shoppers" examining the wares in a large shop front. He chided himself for being unduly suspicious, and soon the incident had been forgotten.

Upon the day that they were to entrain for Chicago the Mayor talked to Rex alone. His fears for the boy's safety had been allayed, but he still wanted to counsel the lad in regard to the events of the future.

"Rex," he said, "I hope that this trip will prove a great and lasting pleasure for you. It can never hurt you to acquire as much knowledge of the world that surrounds us as possible, especially when you're young. But there's one thing that you must remember: should any difficulty of any sort arise don't fail to confer with John MacAndrews before you do anything else. Perhaps there will be some trouble in connection with this ruby affair. In that case try to use your head more

than your hands. Keep away from danger, but if danger should present itself, make every effort to avoid it rather than to mix into it. 'Mac' is an old hand at trouble-shooting, and if you stick to him there'll be no chance of a mishap. Do you understand me, son?"

Rex looked his father full in the face. He appreciated the frank, man-to-man expressions that the older man employed. No coddling nor, on the other hand, no downright strictness. Somehow father and son had reached a middle ground that proved an effectual field for mutual understanding and admiration.

"I understand you perfectly, Dad," said Rex, "and believe me, I'll be plenty careful. At least we know that some one wants that ruby, and that in all probability he'll make some attempt to get it. But he can't harm us, and if we all stick together he can't kidnap us and hold us as hostage."

The Mayor agreed. The size of the party would make it an obstacle to any subtle manoeuvres on the part of the thief, and he uttered no further caution. When train time rolled around he journeyed to the station with

the beaming, jolly parents of Butterball Thomas. These latter, totally ignorant of the secret mission, were enormously pleased that their son had been chosen to accompany the MacAndrews party. His duty would be to send in a series of articles on topics of interest in the lands they were to visit, and these articles were to be featured in the Sunday edition of the "Call" each week. Of course, the Mayor had quite a bit to do with the arrangement whereby the boy was allowed to travel, but the Thomases knew nothing of this.

At the station many of the boys' friends had come to see them off. Butterball was a sight to behold. His fond parents had lavished upon him every gift that seemed appropriate for the expedition and the good-natured lad was laden with all sorts of impedimenta. About his neck were draped a number of leather belts, each supporting some sort of instrument, such as binoculars, camera, a first aid kit, and other totally unnecessary articles. His arms were full of bags and baggage, to say nothing of a huge pile of magazines and a box or two of candy. An enthusiastic friend pulled the big boy's hat over his eyes just as

he was charging into the station. Butterball, blinded and consequently a menace to everything, promptly stumbled into a magazine stand and accomplished a nice bit of demolishment. He had tripped on a loose belt, and sat upon the stone floor surrounded by assorted newspapers, luggage, candy, and fruit. Even the proprietor of the injured stand had to laugh. Some one finally lifted the hat, and the huge hulk struggled to his feet. The next few minutes were devoted to a spirited chase of the culprit who had blinded him, and that individual, weak from laughter, was summarily dumped 'head first into a refuse can. By the time this was all over the station was in an uproar, and passengers in the waiting train were craning from the windows to watch the fun.

Peace reigned once more, and then our party hurried to find its place in the cars. Fond farewells were speedily taken of everything in sight, and Mrs. Thomas wept upon the sofalike shoulder of her pride and joy. The Mayor felt like crying, too, but knew such action might upset Rex. He contented himself with a hearty grip of the hand all around,



and then the train was steaming out of the station. Rex stood upon the rear platform waving to the tall figure that remained motionless at the station so long as the train was in sight. There was a heavy lump in the boy's throat, for this was the first time in his life that he would be away from his dad for any length of time. The Mayor, on his part, felt lonely and forlorn as the train swung around a curve and disappeared. He returned to his home, and to the consolation of Strewth, who seemed to understand.

When Rex finally entered the car in which his friends were taking seats, he found Butterball; as usual, the center of considerable disturbance. The young giant was trying to stow his luggage upon an overhead rack, and as fast as he put one piece up another would fall down, to the amusement of the other passengers.

Inspector MacAndrews and George were quietly conversing, and Rex decided to help his fat friend in his efforts to lodge the luggage safely. In due time all was arranged, and they, too, took seats facing the two Englishmen. The trip to Chicago was of short

duration, and soon they were disembarking and hurrying in taxis to their hotel. On the way the Inspector had told them that disguise on the part of himself and Lord Berkely would be dispensed with because it had proven ineffectual. They must chance it in their own personalities, only resorting to fictitious names. Their passports had been issued under false names, prearranged by the British Government, and they thought it best to continue under these aliases.

The hotel which had been selected was small and semi-private, but of an excellent character. In preference to one of the larger and more conspicuous places they chose the "Warwick." Every one liked the appearance of the hotel as soon as he saw it. There was a certain dignity about it. The rooms were commodious, and the restaurant served good food. It was the last place in the world that one would expect interference or trouble.

Rex and Butterball had a large double room, while the Inspector and George had a similar room connecting with theirs through a bath. The furniture seemed cozy and in good taste, and all four were anxious to try

the comfortable beds. The ride from Hilton, while not long, had made them extremely sleepy. It was decided that after dinner they would all retire. As the time of their arrival had been about five o'clock, there was yet an hour or two to wash and rest a bit. The traveling bags were opened and the clothes deposited in drawers and closets. In a jiffy there was a semblance of home present in the large rooms, and the travelers began to feel more at ease. They gathered together in the Inspector's room and chattered vigorously. It is doubtful if ever a thought of the "Grinning Ghost" entered their minds. At last, before descending to dinner, they watched the Inspector place another false ruby in the little chamois bag and hide it beneath a pile of shirts in a dresser drawer. The balance of the glass he left in the capacious pocket of his tweed jacket.

The dinner that evening was excellent, as had been every other service in the Warwick Hotel. Waiters came and went silently, depositing luscious dishes or removing empty plates. Though the dining room was crowded, there was little of the bustle and confusion

usually present in larger and more garish restaurants. The high ceilings and tapestry hung walls made the speech of other diners a scarce heard murmur.

Rex surveyed the throng busily engaged with the evening meal. One or more of them, he felt, was conspiring to secure the ruby. He had not voiced his suspicions, but again on the train had he sensed that some one was watching their every movement. Now, in the quiet dining room, he experienced the same feeling, and attempted to learn the direction from which this vague wave of thought issued. In his pocket he carried a small bit of mirror, and under cover of a napkin he raised it so that the tables behind became visible. All he saw was a number of chattering people, but two among them held his curiosity. One was a huge blond woman, heavily rouged, and the other was her companion, a middle aged man of coarsely seamed features. Both were oddly out of place in this sedate hotel, and Rex was sure that it was something entirely new for them. The Inspector had noticed the bit of mirror with his eagle eye.

"Sleuthing already, eh?" he asked, and then

smiled. "I see you've been noticing that couple directly behind you." The others looked about as carefully as possible. They all managed to catch a glimpse of the pair. The Inspector, who sat opposite Rex, was able to watch them without turning.

"They've jolly well looked over here a time or two," he said, "but I think it's harmless. Unless I'm mistaken the man is Joe Pinocci, the beer king. You see, I'm pretty well up on my American criminals. Those men seated at the other table behind them are Pinocci's body guards. They would choose a place like the 'Warwick' to dine. It's their idea of flaunting society, I imagine. You can see that the head waiter is nervous about their presence here. I suppose he was afraid to keep them out. Fancy the 'Warwick' being invaded by such specimens." It was evident that the Inspector knew the "Warwick" of old, although this was his first visit to America in almost twenty years.

Rex was marveling at the keen perception of this rapidly aging detective, but then he recalled that only a man of remarkable qualities would have been chosen to carry out the

mission. He wished that he could show the great man that he, too, was a detective, and capable of as keen observation. But no opportunity seemed to present itself. They continued the dinner in silence, save for a few comments from George, to whom everything in America, even the food, was a source of wonder.

"You know, Rex, old bean," the sandy haired and pink cheeked youth said at one time, "Chicago is a bit of all right, but where on earth are all the bullets that you read about in London? According to our papers, every time a citizen of Chicago breathes he is liable to inhale a mouthful of lead."

Rex laughed. "I'm sorry that there hasn't been any shooting of late, George, but perhaps we're not in the shooting zone right now." He winked at Butterball, who accepted the cue and nodded.

"They never shoot any one at dinner," the fat boy said seriously. "They always wait until after. It's a law."

George laughed with the rest. He wasn't easily jollied, and the American boys liked the way in which he joined the fun. George

was a good egg, even if he did talk like a bit out of the latest "talky."

Dessert and coffee ended the meal, save for the Inspector's cigar. This lighted, the old gentleman relaxed comfortably in his chair. To all intent and purpose he was busily studying the wisps of blue smoke that floated from his mouth, but in truth he was watching Joe Pinocci and company. Not that he was interested in these weird characters from the professional point of view (they weren't jewel thieves) but merely because it was natural in him to survey all types and kinds of law-breakers. When the Pinocci party left, he followed them to the door with his eye. A likeness of every man was photographed in his brain. That was Inspector John MacAndrews!

Eventually the great detective blew a last cloud of aromatic smoke from his lips and smothered the glowing end of his cigar in an ash tray. At this the party arose and entered the hotel lobby. The three boys decided to go up to the rooms at once, while MacAndrews informed them of his intention to remain for a few moments in the lobby. He wanted

to smoke another cigar and read a newspaper. They left him comfortably ensconced in a huge leather chair, with a "Tribune" spread out upon his lap.

The boys chatted amiably as they ascended in the lift, remarking on the peculiar appearance that the noted Chicago gangsters had made in the dining room. In high spirits they unlocked the door to the Inspector's room and then stood back in amazement and fear. *The room had been ransacked!*

Every drawer in the bureau and chiffonier had been opened and the clothes scattered in profusion on the floor. The door to the closet stood open, and a similar state of affairs prevailed there. Even the bedding had been torn from the beds. The empty suit cases lay in shreds, evidently cut to pieces by some sharp instrument.

Rex left his friends regarding the mess and rushed through the bath into his and Butterball's room. The same sight greeted him. Each article of clothing and luggage lay upon the floor. The room resembled the result of a Kansas cyclone in full blast.

He hurried back and examined the drawer



which had contained the false ruby. No trace of the glass could be found. Whoever had made the search had been thorough, to say the least. Meanwhile George had raced downstairs for the Inspector. The two came running back, and they were accompanied by the hotel detective.

"Lord," the latter said, and then started to take their names. When he came to Rex he appeared to recall the lad's face, and asked if he wasn't the lad who had landed the Hilton jewel thieves.

"Yes," Rex answered. "But how did you know? There was nothing in the papers, I'm sure, and I didn't testify at the trial."

"Well, Jim Hallowell is a friend of mine," the house detective confessed, "He told me all about it."<sup>2</sup>

He then introduced himself to the youth, who in turn introduced him to the others. Rex regretted that the two Englishmen were traveling incognito, for he would have liked to present them in their true character to Long, the detective of the "Warwick." After the

<sup>2</sup> Sergeant James Hallowell of the detective division, Hilton Police, was in charge of the investigation of the Crystal Clue case.

introductions had been completed, Long made a thorough examination of the room and then left to report to the management. He thought it strange when the four assured him that nothing had been taken. "Who would mess up a room like that for nothing?" he grumbled as he departed.

Once the man was gone, the four began a minute search, checking on the search that Long had made. There did not appear to be much in the way of clues. However, Rex noticed that the detective had failed to look upon the old fashioned mantelpiece that stuck out from the wall about six feet above the floor. Below it was the customary fireplace. Upon the mantel lay a flat cigarette tray, and Rex lifted it down for inspection. Sure enough, the end of a partially smoked cigarette, silk tipped and obviously feminine, rested in the tray. A trace of rouge was visible at the extreme end of the silk tip. Just as Rex made this discovery, George, who had been examining a far corner of the room, gave vent to an exclamation of triumph:

"See here," he cried, "this looks as though it might have just dropped here." He ex-

hibited a long, black hairpin from which depended a bit of blond hair.

Rex announced his discovery at the same time, and they both hurried to show the Inspector their finds. He examined both bits of evidence, and then remarked: "Looks as though a woman had been in here. But these might have been left by the last occupant of the room."

Butterball thereupon hastened away to interview the desk clerk as to the persons who had resided in the room previous to their arrival. He returned in a few moments with an expression of extreme puzzlement on his face.

"There hasn't been a woman in this room for three months," he announced.

"Might have been a maid," hazarded Rex.

"I thought of that, too," Butterball said, "but the maid who does the rooms on this floor has grey hair, and she certainly doesn't smoke. I asked the clerk particularly, and he told me."

"But it was undoubtedly a woman," said MacAndrews firmly. "And a blond woman, too, who smokes imported tobacco."

Rex had been standing quietly by during this discourse. His quick wit was busy turning over a remarkable bit of speculation. Now, he thought, he could show the Inspector a thing or two.

"Mighty tall woman," he said bluntly.

"What do you mean?"

The boy pointed toward the mantel.

"Look at the height of that thing. What woman would reach up there to place a cigarette end? There are plenty of ash trays about that are easier to reach. That one seems to have been placed there by the maid while cleaning and she forgot to return it to where it came from originally."

The Inspector glanced up sharply. "You're right, only a tall woman would reach all the way up there."

"Or a tall man," Rex suggested.

"Eh?"

"See this rouge?" Rex asked. "Well, most women place the whole tip of the cigarette in their mouths when they smoke, whereas men usually hold it by the very end in their lips. No woman smoked that cigarette. It was smoked by a tall man."

MacAndrews laughed. "That's a bit far-fetched, my lad. Why would a man rouge his lips and smoke . . ." he paused. "By Jove, you may be right," he added, gnawing his under lip.

"There's something more," Rex said. "Take that hairpin and the blond hair. The hair is short, and the hairpin long. What woman would use a long hairpin in bobbed hair? But even if that were illogical, how do you account for the fact that a blond woman uses a black hairpin?"

The boys and MacAndrews gazed at him in admiration. Obviously the clues were false, planted there to suggest the presence of a woman.

"No," Rex was saying as he read their thoughts, "there was no woman in here to-night. The person in here to-night was the companion of Joe Pinocci at dinner."

"B-b-but he was with a woman," Butter-ball spluttered.

"You may think so, but I'm sure he wasn't, though his companion was dressed in an elaborate gown. A female impersonator, that's who 'she' was, and a good one, it seemed, al-

though she had black hairpins in her blond wig. That 'woman' was in these rooms to-night, and she left those clues on purpose. We'd be watching every blond woman that came our way from now on, and forgetting about the men."

Rex's shrewdness pleased the Inspector. "I do believe you're on the right track," he said, "but why in the world should Joe Pinocci be interested in the ruby, or rather how did it come to his notice? He's only a beer baron."

"I don't think it is Pinocci," Rex averred. "It's the man who was with him to-night, whoever he is. To-morrow I'll have Long find out what famous jewel thief masquerades as a woman occasionally."

## CHAPTER IV

### AN ATTEMPTED HOLDUP

THE morning following the destructive search of their rooms found the four travelers up bright and early. Despite the disturbing thought that they were under constant surveillance, they managed to sleep well and the desire to linger in bed was easily overcome. Rex was anxious to have a chat with Long, the house detective, and hastened into his clothes leaving the rest of the party to dress at leisure. Soon he was down in the lobby in intimate conversation with the friend of Jim Hallowell.

"Can you dig around at police headquarters and find out anything about this friend of Pinnocci's?" Rex asked the detective, after explaining his suspicions.

"I still have a number of friends at headquarters," Long smiled, "but I can't leave the hotel before noon. That's my time off, and I have all afternoon."

Rex signified that this would suit his plans. "I'd go with you myself," he said, "but I don't want to mix in this too much. And I think it would be best if you be as casual as possible in your questioning. Just say that you noticed the 'woman' in the dining room last night, and that you thought she was a 'phoney.' Whatever you find out you can tell us to-night."

Long agreed to the suggestions. He hadn't the slightest idea what the whole situation represented, but he was by nature a man whose curiosity had been reduced to a minimum. His own affairs were the only things that interested him. This bit of inquiry that he was to make for Rex was a side issue, and he did not care to know the details. If he had any private opinions, he kept them to himself.

Upon returning to the rooms, Rex found his friends busily attacking a mountainous breakfast that had been sent up to the Inspector's quarters. George and Butterball were absorbed in the contents of a huge platter of scrambled eggs, evidently trying to see which could eat the most. The taciturn MacAndrews had finished his frugal repast of orange juice,



toast and coffee, and was standing with his back to the boys, gazing out of the window at the city. Though the windows were all shut, for the day was cold, the mighty hum of Chicago could be heard rising from the streets below. Far off, to the north, the blue of the lake was dotted with many forms of watercraft. Abruptly the Inspector wheeled about and suggested to the boys that they hire a car and "see the sights." The prospect of a pleasant day was acceptable to all, and they telephoned down to the desk clerk to have a car ready at their disposal. Rex, who knew the city, insisted that he would drive. "I wish I had my own little roadster handy," he said, and then thought of Hilton and his father. "Must telephone Dad to-night," he thought.

The hotel management had secured a comfortable Cadillac sedan for the boys, and they piled in with Rex at the wheel.

"Some class!" Butterball murmured as they rolled smoothly out of the driveway, and, "A bit of all right," echoed George.

They drove slowly about, stopping at Marshall Field's to stun George with the huge size of that vast emporium, and then continuing

about from one sight to another. As they went, Rex explained to George how the city had been constructed on reclaimed swamp land, and then told him of the Great Fire that had demolished the city in 1871. They inspected the famous Pullman yards, and George heard of the Pullman strike of 1894 in which the name of Eugene V. Debs had become a household word. The English lad was startled at the tremendous struggles that Chicago had endured, and at the great strides that it had made in a comparatively short time. He thought it too bad that a city of such great promise should be in the grip of a vast army of political thugs.

"By George," said George, "I'd like to see one of these gangsters who seem to comprise about the entire population of Chicago according to our English newspapers."

The Inspector reminded him that they had seen at least six of them on the previous evening.

"I know," the young man replied, "but I'd like to see them with their sub-machine guns and all that sort of thing."

"Perhaps it can be arranged for your maj-

esty," Butterball remarked. "Who would you like to have shot to-day?"

The laugh that followed was general. They were now driving far out on the boulevard that skirts the lake near the city, and all were admiring the splendid view. The road, at that hour, seemed nearly deserted and they spun along rapidly with Rex "speeding 'er up" until the speedometer registered fifty-five. The wind from the lake whistled about them, but in the warm interior of the sedan the chill was unnoticed. At length they swung around preparatory to returning to the city. George had expressed a desire to see the stockyards before they should return to their rooms at the hotel.

"Why see them?" Butterball wanted to know. "We can open up a window in the hotel, and when the breeze is right you can smell them, which is as good as seeing any day. In fact it has its advantages. You can always shut the window."

While this light banter was going on, an odd thing happened. With a sudden roar a huge, black limousine flashed past them, so close that it almost forced Rex into a soft "shoulder"

that bordered the macadam. As it shot by, the Inspector gasped and nudged George, who sat next to him.

"Did you see?" he cried, as the limousine drew away from them. "It looked very much like one of the men who sat near Pinocci last night."

"He was staring in here," George added excitedly. "Let's follow the bounder."

Rex had increased his speed by now, and kept the black car in sight. The pursued was now pursuer.

The "Caddy" had plenty of pep, and purred along happily. But despite Rex's endeavor to catch up, the other car vanished suddenly in the maze of traffic that thickened as they neared the heart of the city. The boys attempted to spot it again, but it must have turned off into a side street, for they could not distinguish it in the multitude of cars that rolled on before them.

The sudden appearance and disappearance of the black limousine caused them to ride back to the hotel. It was dusk, and Rex hoped that Long had returned with some news for them. To his delight the burly house "dick"

was pacing up and down in the hotel lobby. He nodded to Rex as the boys, together with MacAndrews, passed him, and motioned with an upraised thumb, indicating that he would come upstairs as soon as possible.

While the boys washed up, ridding themselves of the city dust that had collected during the long ride, they discussed the possible meaning of the inspection to which they had been subjected.

"Probably was just refreshing his memory as to our appearance," the Inspector told them. "I imagine that we can expect some trouble from that quarter, although I can't understand why they are interested in us, unless word has come from England that we have the ruby. Even so, I don't believe that any gangster would want it. It's not in their line. Probably some one is employing them to frighten us." And the Inspector laughed gayly. He was not a man easily frightened, nor were the boys, either.

A tap on the door interrupted them, and Butterball hurried to admit Long, who stood outside. "I've some news," he said briskly as he crossed the room. "That person who was

seen with Pinocci last night is known as the 'Alley Cat.' He's foreign to Chicago, however, and Pierson, at headquarters, thinks he's a Frenchman. They have no definite report on him, but Pierson says he's heard of the man, and happened to have seen him in the 'Loop' a few days ago. He didn't know that the 'Alley Cat' was a friend of Pinocci's. The man got his name from his occasional use of feminine disguise. He's believed to have been mixed up in a number of international thefts, but he's never been in jail on this side of the water. They tell me he's a dangerous sort, and usually operates alone. He was an entertainer in the lower class of Parisian music halls before he became a crook. That's about all I know, but I'd like to get the goods on him. Of course I'm not official, and can't leave the hotel, but if he ever pulls off anything in here again I'll grab him."

The Inspector had recognized the peculiar nickname of the criminal. He had never seen the man, but police circles abroad were constantly agog over the bold exploits of the "Alley Cat." His real name was thought to be Berand.

Long continued to stay in the room as long as he deemed it advisable. His job necessitated his constant prowling about the hotel, and he could not remain for any great length of time in one spot. Consequently, after chatting a while with the Inspector (he suspected that the tall Englishman was an official of some sort) he left, while the four made ready for the evening meal.

Dinner that night passed without any untoward event. The restaurant was less crowded than on the night previous, and there were no signs of Pinocci and his crew. After the last course, the boys decided to take George to one of the new "talkies." MacAndrews excused himself on the grounds that he would read his paper and turn in early. He remained in the lobby while the boys went up to don their overcoats and hats. When they returned they found him engrossed in the "Tribune." He seemed pleased at an article that featured the round the world flight of a famed British aviator, Major Billingsford-Smythe.

"The first news of home I've noticed in weeks," he commented. "I guess Billings-

ford-Smythe will prove to be an English Lindbergh." He chuckled to himself, as the boys left him. They promised to return directly after the picture.

The three hours that was spent in the latest "cathedral of the motion picture" passed rapidly. Young Lord Berkely assured the boys that there were several cinema houses in London as gaudy and bizarre as the one they were attending. But the magnificent stage presentation that preceded the feature picture was a revelation to him. London didn't go in for that sort of thing.

"I didn't care for that," he whispered as the curtain was rung down on the typical American version of a South Sea island scene with a choir of voices holding a last, screeching note. "It's too much, too shoddy to my mind. And tiresome. I'd much prefer pictures alone, wouldn't you?" His friends agreed silently. There was something wrong with these monstrous stage shows. Like an over-decorated Christmas tree, or an Italian festival, they were. As Rex pointed out later: "If you really care for good music and entertainment, these imitation shows seem cheap.



They simply throw together a lot of tinsel and gold drapes and call it stupendous."

The picture was excellent, however, and it did George no end of good to note that four of the five principals were English. He felt a bit homesick after it was all over.

They wormed their way out of the great theatre through long queues of late patrons waiting to find seats, and eventually landed in the street. The hotel was within walking distance, and they trotted smartly along, almost driven by the chill wind that swept up from the lake. As they turned a corner that brought them to the street upon which the hotel fronted, a long, black sedan drew up at the curb near them. The street was deserted. Rex, in a flash, surmised the meaning of that silent, curtained sedan. He shouted to his companions, just as three men stepped out of the car. "Run!" he called, and felt in his pocket.

He carried no pistol, of course, but he did have a tough, handy Scout knife. As the two boys before him started to hurry along, the three men ranged themselves across the curb. "Stop!" they growled ominously,

hands in coat pockets. But before they had a chance to move, the huge Butterball flung himself forward, heavy fists whaling. George dived in, too, and the three men, not expecting such an attack from two boys, were trying to drag the guns they carried from their pockets. Gangsters are yellow, as any "cop" will certify, and without guns they are helpless. As the fight started, Rex dropped back, slid over to the car and with a quick thrust had driven his knife deep into the nearest tire. With a mighty hiss the air was expelled, and the boy hastened to the aid of his friends. But no aid was needed. As soon as that hiss was heard, the gunmen had flung loose from the two lads and started to tear down the street. Their means of retreat had been effectively cut off. Just as they started, a uniformed policeman came in sight. He saw the running figures, and darted after them, firing wildly from his automatic. But the three had separated, and were soon lost from view as they rushed into alleys and cross streets. Capture was not possible.

The boys waited as the policeman returned. He looked over the car, and then telephoned

from a nearby patrol box for a service wagon. He then spoke to the boys, asking them what had happened. To him it seemed like an ordinary holdup, daring enough at that fairly early hour.

"They'll do anything, nowadays," he said. "We'll try to trace the car, but it will probably be useless. You're lucky you weren't shot, me lads. That was a smart trick, slicing that tire." He beamed at Rex with frank admiration.

After cautioning them about showing money in public places and such things, he allowed them to continue to the hotel where, once in their rooms, they hurried to bed. Gentle snores from the Inspector's bed caused them to refrain from waking him. Rex and Butterball retired to their room, leaving George to seek his bed next to the Inspector's. Soon the three were fast asleep, dreaming no doubt of the adventures that had befallen them in only one day in Chicago.

\* \* \* \* \*

It must have been almost three A.M. when Rex suddenly awoke. He had unaccountably aroused himself from a dream in which a

masked bandit was struggling with him on the roof of a garage. Now he opened his eyes, and noted the darkness that surrounded him. A faint stir of air was circulating about the room. Suddenly his scalp began to prickle. He felt instinctively that some one was in the room, or perhaps in the next room. Though he could see nothing, a strange sensation chilled his blood. It reminded him of the night in the library at home when the light had gone out. He raised his head a bit, directing his gaze toward the connecting door that led to the bathroom. It was a vague blot of shadow in the already darkened room. His first impulse was to get up and slip toward that door, but caution held him back. Then the faintest sound could be heard from the next room, as though padded feet were sliding over the thick carpet. His over sensitive ears were strained to catch a repetition of that sound, but there was nothing more to be heard. As he peered at the connecting door, the blot of shadow darkened perceptibly. It was more a feeling, than a certainty. Was that door opening? Rex watched in fascination. It was opening, he was sure, and his nerves began to tingle.

Should he awaken Butterball? No, it might be nothing. What could come through the Inspector's room, anyway? He decided that it was the effect of his dream, and lowered his head, but as he did so something happened that sat him bolt upright. Floating in the doorway was the hideous face of the Grinning Ghost. The pale, green luminescence was blood curdling in its weirdness. "I am Kal," said the moving lips, as Rex shouted, "Inspector!" The light vanished as the boy, out of bed in an instant, ran to the door. The others could be heard rising in haste. They rushed to the bathroom, Butterball behind Rex, the others before him on the opposite side. Then all four noticed the open window. They had not thought of it before, for it was one of the usual frosted variety. Now they saw that it gave on an iron fire escape. The Inspector thrust his head out and looked down. Nothing could be seen.

"So that nuisance came back again," said the Inspector after Rex had told him of the recurrence of the horrible green face. "Old Kally won't leave us alone a second. Hah!"

He disappeared into his room for a moment,

and then returned, grinning. "He got the rest of those rubies," he said. "Took 'em out of my coat pocket. Must know they're fakes, and wants to get rid of them so that whoever comes next won't be fooled. That means there must be plenty of Kal's friends anxious to handle the ruby. Well, we'll stop them sooner or later. We'll have to be careful, from now on, and try and catch these fellows before they get desperate enough to kidnap us."

"They have already," George told him. "They tried to take all three of us to-night." And then he related their adventure.

The Inspector uttered an occasional "H-rumph!" from time to time, and then announced brusquely: "Looks as though we're in for plenty of fun, don't you know. To-morrow, or rather, this evening, we leave for San Francisco and the *Empress of Japan*. They'll still be after us, and I hope they are on the ship, that's all." With this enigmatical remark, he and George retired to their beds, as did Rex and Butterball to theirs. The sleep of the four travelers was not disturbed again that night, but in their dreams hung the menacing face of Kal.

## CHAPTER V

### REX SUSPECTS SOME PASSENGERS

SAN FRANCISCO! . . . shrouded in a fog that brought to the minds of the two Britons a vision of London. San Francisco tall buildings overlooking the Golden Gate where great steamers plied, flanked by puffing little tugs. San Francisco . . . housing occult mysteries in its famed Oriental quarter.

The travelers were more impressed by this strange city than they had been by the tumult of Chicago. They had arrived early on this foggy morning, and were to sail the same day. A few hours remained to sailing time, and, after checking their luggage through to the steamer, they saw as much as was possible of the city in the brief period allowed them.

George and the Inspector wished to visit the tortuous streets of the Chinese quarter, and so they walked leisurely in that direction. It was unique to the two Britons to

see so much of a foreign atmosphere in an American city. They were thrilled at each new turn.

"You know," Rex said, "there's a reason for the crooked streets that you will find in any Oriental section. They believe that the devil, or the numerous fiends that correspond to our devil, can not travel except in a straight line. Hence the twisted streets."

The others laughed. They were well aware of the beliefs that seem almost comical to our Western minds. But their interest was aroused by the sights that they saw in Chinatown. They forgot to laugh, for the East seems to forbid laughter in its own domain. The tiny shops, and rambling houses, created an atmosphere of great age and wisdom. The influences of the West were almost negligible in this section, although many of the Orientals were dressed in the manner of our own civilization. For the most part they looked ill at ease, as though they longed to resume the loose, comfortable habiliments of their ancestors but as though they deemed it advisable to adopt the costumes at least of the country they had adopted.



On every hand were shops where one might buy curios and trinkets fashioned of jade, ivory, and other materials. From these shops came a babble of strange voices, floating on the oddly perfumed air that filled the quarter. The boys would have liked to have spent a good deal of time wandering about in the crooked maze of the streets, but they realized that they must leave shortly for the ship.

They stopped for a cup of the sweet, jasmine scented tea that was served in a tiny shop with an imitation pagoda front. The tea was good, and they munched thin, papery, rice cakes that tasted like the American ice cream cone. At last they hurried back to the dock, where the giant *Empress of Japan* was ready for its voyage across the Pacific.

Rex was thrilled as he stepped up the gang plank and found himself upon the deck of the ship. His friends hastened to find their cabins amidst the mêlée of passengers and their friends who stood in clumps in all quarters of the ship. To the boy the steamer was a new experience. He admired the shining brass work, and clean white paint that sparkled everywhere. Coils of tarred rope

were neatly piled here and there, occasionally tripped over by the excited people who trod the deck. Toward the stem of the boat a gigantic crane was lowering a last netful of cargo into the maw of the hold. The din was terrific. Monkey-like Japanese sailors were scrambling about, calling to each other in their strange tongue. The farewells of those who had come to see their friends off were long and noisy. The creaking of the crane added yet another note in this mixture of sound, while far out in the bay could be heard the booming whistles of other craft.

Rex took in the whole scene with pleasure, and then hastened to join the others in their cabins. A steward, speaking perfect English, directed him to the proper deck, and thence to the long corridor where the staterooms reserved for the four could be found. He entered the door which bore the number of his cabin, and found Butterball and the two Englishmen already chatting about the boat while they helped the big boy to unpack. Both his and Rex's small steamer trunks were safely lodged in the narrow chamber. With the mass of the fat lad's paraphernalia strewn

about, the stateroom seemed a bit too small. It contained an upper and lower berth, two comfortable chairs, and a large bureau. As in the hotel in Chicago, the Inspector and George had the adjoining room, and a tiny bath stood between. After the luggage had been properly stowed away, the cabins would be much more attractive than they appeared at first sight.

A young steward popped in and out from time to time, to discover whether his aid was needed. The rush of passengers was heavy, and the little steward was quite funny in the rabbit-like manner in which he scurried about. Just as the boys had cleared the last of the baggage away, a bell rang in the corridor simultaneously with three long blasts on the ship's whistle which could be heard all over the ship. Every one rushed to the decks, and the Inspector's party was quick to join the other passengers. Visitors to the ship were hurrying down the gangplank and ranging themselves along the dockfront to cry their last good-byes. The passengers lined up along the rails on the three upper decks, and handkerchiefs began to flutter in the breeze. The

gangplank was raised up and back, and the busy sailors began to cast off the ropes that moored the vessel. Suddenly a long toot on the whistle, an answering toot from the tug that was to take them through the Gate, and the mighty liner glided slowly away from the pier. Shouts and cheers rose from the dock and were echoed by those on the ship. The gap between the steamer and the dock widened. They were on their way.

Gradually the passengers disappeared from the decks to return to their rooms, or to visit the lounges and smoking rooms. Somewhere an orchestra was playing soft music which floated up to the deserted decks. Soon the ship would be through the Golden Gate, and heading out into the vast blueness of the ocean.

The four travelers had walked to the stern of the ship on "A" deck, and were watching the skyscrapers of San Francisco vanish from sight. After the last misty tower had disappeared in the distance, they threaded their way back to the companionway that led down into the bowels of the liner. It was during this brief stroll that Rex noted certain peculiar characteristics of the vessel itself. Al-

though of great beauty, there seemed to be, here and there, a few things oddly out of "true." The entrance to the lounge, for instance, appeared to be strangely off center. One of the railed stairways to the next deck was in an unexpected place. He wondered about these errors in construction, and pointed them out to the Inspector.

"Oh," said MacAndrews, "I know all about that, and I meant to tell you all before this. It's an amusing story."

They had reached their cabins by now, and all assembled in the one occupied by Rex and Butterball.

"This is what happened," the Inspector continued as the boys seated themselves about, "The Japanese are probably the foremost imitators in the world. There are no laws to prevent them from duplicating anything that may have been made in another country. Now, in the case of this boat, the story goes that the Scotch engineers who designed the twin to this steamer feared that the plans for this boat would be rejected by the Japs, after a copy had been made of their specifications. They could not protect themselves by law, of course,

so they hit upon the scheme of making their design just a bit off 'thru', so that unless the boat was built in Scotland the plans would be useless. They knew that the Japanese boat builders were not good engineers, and that the mistakes in the plans would not be discernible to them.

"What happened was that the Japs rejected the plans, and then proceeded to build the boat from a copy they had made. When the boat was launched it turned right over in the water. But here the builders showed their cleverness. They righted the ship, and then filled its bottom with a huge sand ballast. It's been plying between Japan and the United States ever since. The only difference between it and its sister is that this boat carries less cargo, having so much sand in its hold."<sup>3</sup>

The boys enjoyed this tale, as it indicated the nature of the people they would come in contact with upon their arrival in Japan. For some time they listened avidly to similar stories from the Inspector, who had a vast knowledge of the Orient.

<sup>3</sup>This anecdote is based on actual facts relating to a certain well-known steamship.

The boat continued to roll gently on its way. The weather was ideal, and as evening approached the first stars blinked brightly in the skies. If the journey was to be all like this, it would be a pleasant trip. Butterball eyed his boxes of anti-seasickness pills with a grim satisfaction. If they should strike a rough sea, he was prepared, but he sincerely hoped they would be but excess baggage.

While the travelers were talking of the possible presence on the ship of some one who might be seeking the ruby, a bell sounded in the corridor. They had been advised that this bell signified a half hour to dinner, and so they separated, the Inspector and George to their stateroom and Rex and Butterball remaining in theirs. As they dressed for the first meal on shipboard they called back and forth to one another through the open doors of the connecting bath.

"Hang it!" Butterball kept crying, "I can't get the studs into this stiff shirt." To be true, his pudgy fingers were far too large to negotiate the intricacies of the full dress shirt. By the time he had succeeded in forcing one stud into position the shirt looked as

though it had been put through a mangle. In his frenzy, the huge lad kept knocking down one thing after another. The din sounded like the noise that only a boiler factory can furnish. Eventually he managed to dress himself fully, and then turned his perspiring face toward Rex who waited, slim and debonair in his natty dinner jacket, beside the stateroom door. John MacAndrews and Lord Berkely were already to go, and the four began their search for the dining room.

The first meal on a big liner is always a pretty sight. Every one dresses in gala array, and the picture is at once colorful and vivid. So did our party find the huge dining saloon of the *Empress of Japan*. The tables were already thronged with a chattering mass of passengers. At the foot of the room was the Captain's table with that officer presiding over the privileged guests. Smart, quick Japanese waiters moved noiselessly among the tables. The room had been decorated with flowers, and brilliant blooms were present upon every table. The ladies, too, wore gorgeous corsages, the gift of the steamer and its Captain.

Rex and his friends were allotted a table



for four not far from the Captain's long table. With interest they scanned the menu, and after selecting a number of dishes, sat back to observe their fellow passengers.

Certainly the group in that dining room was possessed of a singular unity. For the most part the diners seemed well dressed and of considerable means. Here and there faces that were obviously not accustomed to such splendor were evident, but they were in the minority. Seated across the room from the boys' table was another group of four that attracted the attention of Rex, who faced them.

The party was composed of a man and three ladies. From the way in which the man spoke to one of the ladies it appeared that he and she were strangers to the other two. They maintained a constant chatter between themselves, ignoring the others. These other women were two of the minority mentioned before. They did not give the appearance of being very comfortable in their surroundings. Both might have been cast from the same mold—a rather shoddy mold at that. Perhaps they were school teachers on a glorified vacation. Their plainness indicated some such

situation. They spoke quietly to each other, and did not notice the coldness of the couple who shared the table with them. Rex had noticed this table, for it was the only one at which a loud gayety was not the rule. He caught the glance of one of the lonely ladies, and for a moment thought that he recognized her. But abruptly he cast this aside, for he knew that none of his old teachers were on the liner. Possibly it was the mere resemblance that exists between all women of that particular vocation.

As the boys were about to begin their first course in the sumptuous dinner they had ordered, Rex saw the two ladies who had attracted his attention arise and leave the room. Evidently their meal had been frugal, and they had finished early. He noted their angular figures, and the loose, ill fitting gowns that they wore. Soon they had passed out to the deck, and he thought no more about them. The couple still remained at the table, and their conversation ran on as brightly as before. From the way in which the woman nodded her head toward the deck, it was obvious that they were now discussing their two

dinner companions. Once the man broke into a loud laugh at something the woman had said.

The meal progressed from course to course, and, as they ate, the four travelers carefully examined the party at the Captain's table. Save for two individuals, they were not a remarkable crowd.

One of these two was a thin, emaciated Jap who wore a bright red ribbon across his shirt front and a diamond insignia pinned to his lapel.

"Wonder who he is?" Rex said to the Inspector, indicating the Jap with a nod of his head.

"I fancy a diplomat of some sort," MacAndrews answered. "Those decorations are Japanese, of course, and if I remember rightly, only the foremost figures in Japanese diplomacy wear that little diamond star."

The others had turned to stare for a moment at the Jap, but hastily looked away. It was hardly polite to examine this man in a crowded public dining room.

The second strange figure at the Captain's table was an American, a man of striking appearance. He appeared to be close to forty,

although it was difficult to determine his exact age. His hair was coal black, and brushed neatly back from his temples. A high white forehead came next, and then a pair of eyes that stared out from their deep sockets with a peculiar steeliness. His nose was slender and tapering, while his mouth was even and gracefully molded. Lastly, his chin was square, and jutted out just a bit from the gentle slope of his profile. A handsome man, and easily distinguished from the rest. Rex knew who he was, although he was not aware of it until the meal had come to an end with the dessert and coffee. Then it flashed upon him in a moment when he was studying this good looking individual.

"That's Hilary Lawrence, the actor," he said to his friends.

"Check," Butterball murmured, "He doesn't look much different in real life than he does on the stage. Remember? We saw him in some play or other the last time we were in Chicago."

Rex nodded. Just then one of those occasional lulls that occurs at most gatherings, pervaded the room almost completely. Law-

rence must have been talking at the moment, for his voice could be heard clear and distinct throughout the dining room. It did not matter what he was saying, but how he said it. His tones were full and deep, seeming to swell from his broad chest. There was the odd clipped accent of the actor noticeable in his speech. A chill suddenly swept through Rex's body. Something was wrong here! He whispered to Butterball and George as the room once more buzzed with its customary chatter:

"That sounded like the voice of Kal!" he suggested.

"By Jove, it did at that," George said eagerly.

"You don't think that Hilary Lawrence could be the so-called Indian idol?" Butterball asked, laughing.

But Rex said nothing. He was busy with a sudden thought. The voice of Hilary Lawrence had lighted a tiny flame in his mind.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE INSPECTOR KNOCKED OUT

THE night was clear, and the star studded sky was cupped above the calm purple of the Pacific. Aboard the *Empress of Japan* lights glowed softly about the decks and from the port holes. Within the main saloon the merry passengers were dancing, stopping now and then to wander out to the breeze swept deck. Some of those who did not dance were getting acquainted about the bridge tables, or talking in little groups concerning the weather, the ship's speed, and the trip in general. Total strangers were chatting among themselves, establishing new bonds of friendship. Nothing is so easily effected as the ship-board friendship. The confinements of the ship, no matter how large it may be, are conducive to rapid friendships. So Rex and Butterball found it as they idled against the rail outside of the main saloon. The first

stranger to make their acquaintance was none other than Hilary Lawrence, who had forsaken the admiring females who cluttered about him in the saloon. He stood quietly by them for a moment, the low peak of his cap partially concealing his handsome features. After a while he spoke to them, casually and apparently without purpose.

"Lovely night, isn't it? I've waited ten years to see this." His deep voice was like the low murmur of distant surf.

"Yes," Rex replied, "It is beautiful."

Butterball remained silent, gazing out over the water. He wondered what George and the Inspector were doing below.

"Rather a boring crowd aboard, don't you think?" the actor asked after a pause.

"I don't think we've been out long enough to determine that," Rex said. And then he introduced Butterball and himself.

"I'm Hilary Lawrence, an actor on vacation," the man said as he clasped the boys' hands in turn. They felt an immediate liking for this modest man. Lawrence's name was familiar to everybody, and yet he had said "an actor," not "the actor."

Rex said that they had recognized him at the table. Then the boy lapsed into silence. Suddenly he wheeled upon his new found friend.

"Did you ever hear of Kal?" he asked quickly.

The actor was amazed. "Carl who?" he asked in turn. There had not been the slightest indication on his face that he knew what the boy was talking about. Rex hastened to add a fictitious name to the supposed "Carl."

"Carl Billings," he said, "An old actor who was a friend of my father's."

"I don't recall him," Lawrence said, after presumably searching his memory.

Rex turned the conversation in other channels. Both he and Butterball found the man an interesting talker. The night was fairly warm for that time of the year, and so they stood against the rail for perhaps an hour listening to stories of the stage. Lawrence had just finished an anecdote about John Barrymore when a scuffle of feet was heard somewhere down the now deserted deck. In the darkness they could descry nothing of unusual appearance, and so the boys and the actor re-



sumed their chat, hearing nothing further of the scuffling sound that had interrupted them. Another half hour passed, and then Lawrence excused himself. The boys waited for a few minutes, talking of the man who had left them.

"Funny," Rex said, "how that chap's voice sounds something like our friend Kal. It makes me think that perhaps the man who is Kal may be an actor too. Naturally it couldn't be Lawrence, but it might be another actor who has turned thief."

Butterball yawned. "Forget old Kally for a while," he told Rex, "We don't have to——"

But he stopped short with a strangled cry. There, floating in the darkness about a hundred feet down the deck was the grinning green face of Kal. Butterball got into motion as quickly as he could, followed by Rex. The big boy charged blindly along the smooth deck at the mysterious glowing face. He was running at top speed when . . . Bam! . . . he tripped over something that lay stretched across the deck. He fell flat, and Rex on top of him. Following the crash of their falling

bodies the green face vanished, and a mocking laugh that sent chills up and down their spines sounded from the place where Kal had been.

The boys rose shakily to their feet.

"What tripped us?" Rex asked.

"I dunno," said his fat friend, "Let's look."

But looking wasn't so easy. They had to crawl a few feet along the deck until Rex's hand touched a human body. Quickly he struck a match and held it in his cupped hands. In the flickering glow they saw the face of the fallen man, for man it was, and none other than Inspector MacAndrews.

"Is he alive?" Butterball cried.

Rex knelt down and placed his ear to the Inspector's chest.

"He's alive, all right, and you'd better run and get help quick."

Rex had hardly finished when Butterball was pounding along the deck. The main saloon and the smoking rooms were mostly deserted, but he found the purser in his office and that gentleman rounded up the ship's doctor. Then, with a flashlight, they started toward the point where Rex was waiting.

They found him supporting the Inspector's head in his lap. MacAndrews was now conscious, and smiled weakly at them from his recumbent position. A great gash in his head was oozing blood which Rex had vainly tried to stanch with his handkerchief. The clear, red drops were spattered over the older man's white face, and had trickled down to Rex's trousers.

Without a word the doctor knelt upon the deck, opened his little black bag, and prepared a temporary dressing for the wound. Nobody asked what had happened. They were reserving their questions until such a time as the Inspector would be able to talk freely. Fortunately both the doctor and the purser believed that the old gentleman had met with an ordinary accident. They did not, of course, know that the wounded man was a detective. Even had they, it is doubtful if they would have voiced any suspicions. The Japs are a taciturn race.

Finally the Inspector was lifted to his feet. He could stand by himself, and waved away the boys when they attempted to put their arms about him.

"Golly, Uncle Ed," Butterball said, "You look like the Spirit of '76." (The Inspector was known on the passenger list as Edward Thomas.)

Butterball's remark applied to the white, blood soaked bandage that was tied about the older man's head. His drawn, grayish features did remind one of the bandaged soldier in the famous drawing.

The doctor asked "Mr. Thomas" if he cared to spend the night in the ship's infirmary, but the reply was in the negative. "I'm all right, only bunged my bean when I tripped on some rope or something," the Inspector said, and that was the only explanation he ever offered to the two Japs of his strange mishap.

The purser and doctor left them to return to their cabins. The Inspector had promised to see the doctor in the morning and have the dressing changed on his head. His insistence that he was all right had convinced the doctor that further treatment at that time would be unnecessary.

The three, Butterball leading the way, descended to the corridor upon which their cabins were located. They passed but one

open door on their way to the far end of the aisle, and Rex shot a quick glance within the stateroom thus exposed. He noted to his surprise that the room was occupied by the two "school teachers" who were sipping a belated cup of steaming tea. They did not appear to notice the passing of the three men, so busy talking were they. Their high, nasal tones followed Rex and his companions down the aisle. The rest of the staterooms were closed, and an occasional resonant snore indicated that several of the passengers in that section were sound asleep. Rex wondered if Lawrence had one of these cabins. The actor's whereabouts kept disturbing his thoughts.

They were walking slowly, because of the Inspector, and it was at least half a minute before they came abreast of their own quarters. Then the Inspector stopped short and sniffed the air. Rex and Butterball followed suit, noting a strange, familiar odor in the atmosphere. Abruptly they flung toward the doors and swung them open. In Rex's cabin there was nothing, but in the Inspector's they found the limp body of George sprawled across the lower berth half undressed. The

odor they had noticed was very heavy in this room.

Butterball shook the prostrate form in the berth, and George tossed about a bit and then opened his eyes. For a moment he seemed stunned, but shook his head vigorously and said:

"I say, what a beastly hour to awaken a chap." Then he noted his partially dressed body, and his eyes widened. "I remember now," he said thickly, "There was that odd smell, and then I must have fallen asleep, but what," he stared at the Inspector's bandaged head, "what happened to you, old chap?"

MacAndrews did not answer. He was busy looking about the room. At length he gave a little cry of triumph. In a crack close to the door sill he had found another of those little tube affairs similar to the one used in the kitchen in Mayor Cole's home.

"Same party," he announced grimly. "I wonder what they expected to find in here?"

Rex interrupted, for a sudden thought had struck him:

"This whole thing looks like a plan. I mean the way we were kept talking on the deck to-

night, and the crack that the Inspector got on the head 'up there. Guess they wanted a chance to go through the rooms, and as George stayed here, they gassed him."

"You keep saying 'they.'" Butterball reminded him. "Do you suppose that there is more than one person on board whose looking for that precious ruby?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, you think that Lawrence is one of them?"

"I don't know," Rex said slowly, "It's hard to believe that that man could be mixed up in this. First of all there's no earthly motive for him, and second I don't feel that he's the type to mingle in this sort of work. I'll amend my statement and say that the guilty party or parties knew that we were up on deck, and would be for some time."

MacAndrews had been listening to the talk of the two boys.

"Who do you think soaked me on the beano?" he asked with a laugh.

"Probably some one who followed you up from the stateroom and wanted to make sure that you were out of the way for a while," Rex

suggested. Then he asked, "By the way, Inspector, where were you going when you were hit?"

"I had just had a chat with some men whom I met in the smoking room, and as the air was thick in there I decided to clear my lungs on deck before going to rejoin George in the cabin. I heard voices farther up the deck and was just going toward them when something hit me behind the ear. I don't remember having heard any one or seen any one near there at the time. Furthermore I don't believe that any one could have slipped up behind me without being heard."

Rex thought for a few seconds. "I think I've got it," he said at last, "Although it doesn't really mean anything, that is we don't know any more about the person who struck you even if I am right in what you may think a wild guess."

"I noticed that the place where you fell is almost at the foot of the iron stairs that lead up to the bridge. Probably whoever hit you was standing on those stairs waiting for you, and when you arrived they simply reached out and clubbed away."



"But," the Inspector asked, "How did they get there in the first place?"

"That's easy," Butterball said, and they turned towards him, amazed at his interruption.

"You know," he continued, "That there's another stairway like that one on the other side of the bridge. Both stairs are joined by an iron platform that runs behind the control room. Whoever wanted to get at the Inspector must have walked on the opposite side of the boat, climbed the other stairs, and crossed over the iron platform. That's just what happened, I'll bet, and the next thing to find out is who knew that you were taking that stroll."

"Yes, who was in the smoking room with you?" Rex asked excitedly. Evidently his suspension was working overtime.

MacAndrews laughed. "There were about ten of us," he said, "I told you the room was thick with smoke, and you know it takes quite a few smokers to cloud up that big room. Why, those two old maids passed by the door, and you would have thought they were about to faint. The way they looked at us nearly

made us shrivel up. I remember Johnson (he's the fellow who sat with them at dinner) said that his wife wanted to change from that table, because she was afraid of doing or saying something that they might consider vulgar. He added that they talked just like a couple of your American school teachers. Incidentally, the one's name is Miss Penniman, and the other's is Miss Hawkins, both from Little Rock, I believe he said. This fellow Johnson is an importer of Japanese manufactures, and an interesting man; I didn't meet his wife."

While the Inspector had been rambling on about his acquaintances of the smoking room, Rex had been busy thinking, a habit with that young man. George Berkely had undressed and was now sleeping again. The effects of the peculiar gas were evidently harmless, but brought profound sleep. The sight of the young Englishman blissfully enjoying this deep slumber caused Rex to think of the Inspector.

"We'd better get to sleep ourselves," he suggested, and motioned to Butterball to follow him through the bath and into their own

room. The Inspector told them that he felt no pain at all from the gash on the head, and they left him with the hope that no more trouble would come to disturb his night's rest.

Once in their room, with the doors locked, Rex did a surprising thing. With a warning finger to his lips for Butterball, he rapidly donned his light overcoat and a cap. From his steamer trunk he extracted a pair of tennis shoes, and quickly substituted them for the black patent leathers that were part of his dinner dress. Then, leaving a wide eyed Butterball behind him, he slipped out of the door, and padded down the corridor.

Alone in the cabin, Butterball found himself too busy thinking about this strange action on the part of his friend to go to sleep. He picked up a magazine from the tiny table next to his berth and made a vain attempt to read it. The clock on their chest of drawers showed midnight. Opposite the berth he could see his reflection mirrored in the glass of the porthole. He expected to see this reflection superseded any moment by the ghastly features of the Grinning Ghost. But nothing happened. The hands of the clock moved around

to twelve-thirty, and still Rex did not return. The fat lad cast the magazine away from him, and rolled over in the berth. In a few moments he was asleep.

## CHAPTER VII

### REX SECURES INFORMATION

REX's nocturnal manoeuvres would have startled even the astute Inspector MacAndrews. After the boy had slipped from his stateroom, he walked hastily down the corridor, listening for a moment at each closed door. At one of them he paused for a greater length of time than he had at any of the others for his ears had caught the murmur of subdued talk. He pressed close to the door, but could not distinguish a word of the conversation. After a quick look up and down the aisle, he bent down and applied his eye to the keyhole. After a moment he straightened up, and continued to the end of the row of cabins where the winding staircase led up to the deck.

On the deserted deck he walked toward the place where the night officer was most likely to be found. The glow of a cigarette attracted him to the stern of the boat, where he found

a young Japanese officer talking to one of the crew. From the two he learned the direction of the Captain's cabin, and proceeded back to the location described to him. A light that shone under the door indicated that the Captain was still awake, and he tapped gently on the paneling. A call to enter caused him to open the door, and he found the Captain seated at his desk with a mass of papers strewn about him. The appearance of a youth in tennis shoes despite the formality of his other clothing startled the man, but he signaled for Rex to take a seat close to the desk.

The Captain of the *Empress* was an American, the only white man in the crew. His grizzled face, and characteristic rolling gait led one to believe that he had spent many years at sea, and this was the truth. He was well known in shipping circles, and had served for several years in the United States Navy with distinction. There was something prepossessing about the man and Rex had no qualms about speaking to him of matters that were not for the general public.

The boy explained who his English companions were, omitting the nature of the mis-

sion they had undertaken. He thought it best to enlighten some one in whom he could confide. Then he told Captain Jordan a bit of his own history, and of Butterball's, too.

"I'm telling you this, Captain," he said, "Because we need your assistance. We are sure that there are, among the passengers on this boat; certain parties who are anxious to cause us considerable trouble. Inspector Mac-Andrews was attacked on the deck to-night, and Lord Berkely was gassed in his cabin at the same time."

The Captain would have laughed at this wild story, had there not been a hint of grim determination on Rex's good looking face. Instead he said:

"What would you like me to do, lad? Do you know who the guilty ones are? If you do I'll clap them in irons and hand them over to the authorities at the end of the voyage."

"No, we don't know who they are, although I have my own suspicions and expect to be able to prove them later. But what I would like to do is to send a wireless message to the States. There's some information I'd like to get from home."

"Well," the Captain stroked his cheek with one pudgy hand, "I imagine that we can attend to that all right." He rose from his seat and pressed a button on the far side of his desk. While they waited for an answer to this signal, the Captain explained that he would instruct the wireless operator to execute all messages with the utmost secrecy. In a brief minute or two the door opened to admit the young officer who had directed Rex to the Captain's quarters. He was told to take Rex up to the radio transmission booth, and to present him to the operator with instructions to send immediately such messages as Rex directed.

Rex thanked the veteran seaman for his kindness, and followed the officer. They climbed several short flights of iron steps until they stood upon the platform that held the wireless room. The night operator was seated at a small table, ear phones lying ready at his hand, and, on his lap, a magazine which he was reading. When the two visitors entered he rose and saluted the officer, who returned the courtesy and then proceeded to relay the Captain's orders in perfect English. The op-



erator nodded his complete understanding of the arrangements and the officer wheeled about and left.

Rex seated himself by the operator, and wrote out two messages upon a sheet of paper which the waiting Jap handed him. One was addressed to Long, the house detective of the "Warwick" in Chicago, and the other to a prominent theatrical agency in New York. Rex had no idea of the latter's address, but the operator assured him that the message would be delivered.

"I'll signal for 'Frisco," he said, "And have the messages relayed across from there."

He placed the paper before him, adjusted the ear phones and, unlocking a "key" that was set into the rear of the table, began manipulating it, setting huge blue sparks leaping across a "gap" above his board. The signal for 'Frisco was repeated regularly until a faint buzz in the ear phones informed him that the receiving station had picked up the call. The operator then began tapping off, one letter at a time, the words that Rex had written. The messages despatched, the operator gave his location and signed off.

"You won't get any answers before the morning," he assured the boy, and Rex decided that it was time to make use of that berth he had neglected. Thanking the operator, and cautioning him to secrecy, the boy left the wireless room, and descended to the deck below. He felt quite sleepy, and the crisp night air that blew in a steady breeze over the ship did not sharpen his senses as they might have done at another time. So it was that he failed to hear the footsteps approaching him along the deck until they were almost upon him. Then he suddenly realized that some one was walking toward him, and that it was mighty late for any passenger to be taking a nocturnal stroll. At the same time, even if it should prove to be one or two of the crew, he did not care to be seen. The young officer who knew of his visit to the Captain was stationed at the opposite end of the ship, so it could not be he. Rex slipped behind a ventilator and waited. In the silence of the night, the footsteps sounded like the ghostly tapping of skeleton feet. They came nearer and nearer, and now Rex could make out that there were two pairs of feet. Also the faint sounds

of low-spoken conversation attended the approach of the walkers, whoever they might be. Rex was now wide awake. He peered cautiously from behind the ventilator, and saw two dark blots of shadow passing near by. The red glow of two cigarettes was visible, and as one of the walkers puffed long on his tobacco, the increased glow showed up his features. It was Lawrence. And then his companion puffed on his cigarette, revealing the pleasant face of Mr. Johnson. As they passed beyond the ventilator, Rex heard Johnson say: "It's a tough proposition, but *I believe we'll get it!*" Then Lawrence mumbled something that was too low for the eager boy to hear.

All the way back to the stairway Rex wondered about seeing those two men. Was there something behind that remark that referred to himself and the rest of his party? It was entirely possible that the walk and the conversation were innocent enough. After all, Lawrence had been with Butterball and himself when the Inspector had been struck down, and there was nothing to indicate that Johnson had been implicated in the attack. Then, too, he remembered what he had vaguely seen

within the stateroom he had examined through the keyhole. There might be something in that. Well, time would tell.

"I wonder where that old ruby is, anyway?" Rex muttered to himself as he entered the stateroom where the mountainous figure of his roommate, under a huge pile of bedclothes undulated gently in breathing. "At any rate," he thought as he undressed, "I'm beginning to get ahead of the Inspector in this game. If I can catch the people who are trying to get the ruby, he'll never get over it. I wonder why he isn't making an attempt himself. Perhaps he is, and I just don't know anything about it." Rex clambered into the upper berth and was soon rocked to sleep by the gentle rolling of the steamer.

He awoke from a dream in which he was riding a tough western bronco over a series of craggy peaks to find the interior of the small cabin revolving in a most astonishing fashion. The porthole which had been below his berth in the far wall now seemed to be in the ceiling. Then it sank suddenly, revealing a patch of blue water and the morning rays of the sun. Then it rose again, and Rex felt a strange

nausea in the pit of his stomach. He clung desperately to the sides of the berth, realizing that it was ascending and descending in time with the roaming porthole. As he struggled to grasp the meaning of these weird motions, he heard a sorry sound from the berth below. Butterball, much to his own regret, had awakened.

"S-s-s-say," the fat lad cried, "What is this, a merry-go-round?"

Just as he spoke, the ship was lifted upon the crest of a mighty wave. C-r-a-s-h! He was thrown to the floor. C-r-a-c-k. His great body had been tossed against a spindle-legged chair, or rather what had once been a spindle-legged chair. Now it was a conglomeration of assorted match sticks and kindling wood. B-o-o-o-m! Another wave hit the boat, and the bare wall of the cabin hit Butterball. He tried to stand up, but the rocking motion of the ship was too much for his top-heavy frame. Down he went again. With a great effort he anchored one foot around the support of the berth, and lay flat upon the floor.

"O-o-oh, O-o-oh," he moaned again, and

then, noticing his roommate's head stuck out over the edge of the upper berth and contorted with laughter, called: "Laugh! Go ahead—laugh, you pinhead! O-o-oh, my stomach."

Rex wasn't feeling any too well himself, but the sight of Butterball in his unusual position on the floor was too much. He roared and roared, even as his own face began to turn slightly green.

Butterball was calling again.

"Rex, Rex . . . Get me my bottles pills . . . anything . . . hurry up!"

Rex partly fell, partly climbed out of his berth. The cabin was still acting like a skidding horse, and it was with difficulty that he entered the bathroom to get his pal's medicine. He saw a large bottle on the shelf within a cabinet.

"How much out of the bottle?" he called.

"Half a glass," was the somewhat weak response.

He poured half a glassful of the medicine into a tumbler, and carried it in to the moaning boy who still clutched for dear life to the bottom of the berth.

"This will fix me up," he said, "Mother had it made specially for seasickness. I'll take the pills later." He took the glass from Rex's hand and conveyed it to his lips. With one gulp the medicine was down. Then things began to happen. He gave vent to the most unearthly of roars. Rex was startled to see the fat boy unleash himself from the berth and lunge to his feet. Still roaring he charged into the bathroom and presently emerged waving the bottle in his hand.

"What do you think you are, you half-wit? I'll teach you to make fun of me when I'm sick."

Rex stared in doubt at the bottle that his chum waved about in his huge ham of a hand. Taking the bottle from the fat boy Rex examined it, shook it, held it to the light, uncorked it, smelt it, tasted it—and with one leap was out of that presence leaving Butterball collapsed on the bathroom floor. Rex had recognized that remedy "made specially for seasickness" for what it really was—castor oil. When he deemed it safe Rex re-entered the bathroom where sat Butterball, pale and wan, staring about with glassy eyes. "Half a

glass!" he was murmuring; "half a glass! Half a——"

In the meantime the Inspector and George had been awakened and were standing in the doorway of the bathroom, watching the other two with amusement written large on their countenances. The Inspector looked fine and dandy, although the bandage upon his head had slipped down a bit revealing a rather nasty wound.

"Blowing up a bit," he opined, grinning.

"*What?*" poor Butterball cried.

"I said: It's jolly well blowing up a bit," the Inspector repeated.

"Oh," Butterball replied, "I thought you said something else, and it isn't true yet."

It was George's turn to add to the "fun." Both he and the Inspector were good sailors, and hardly appreciated the predicament of their friends.

"Me for some kidneys and bacon," he said.

"And a slice of buttered toast."

There was a gurgling sound from both Rex and Butterball. The Inspector and George retreated to their room. Later they joined



Rex on deck. Butterball was among the missing, and remained so for the rest of the day.

The rough weather had affected many of the passengers and the deck was noticeably clear of walkers that morning. Rex had managed to rid himself of his seasickness, and now strolled the deck with little hesitation. The sea was quite rough, with a stiff wind blowing salt spray over the prow of the boat as it dipped and tossed with the waves. Despite the motion of the boat they seated themselves in secure deck chairs and wrapped voluminous blankets about themselves for warmth. Johnson, the merchant, soon came out and took a chair beside the Inspector. The two were shortly involved in a lengthy discussion of the trade conditions that existed between the Orient and the Occident. As they talked, Rex glanced up from the book he was endeavoring to read and studied the face of Mr. Johnson. If the man was a member of the underworld, he certainly did not look it. His white hair and straight profile seemed to stamp him as just what he was or at least said he was: a busy international trader. He told the Inspector that his business had

been founded by his father many years ago, when the famous clipper ships brought cargoes of goods from China, Japan, and India to Boston Harbor.

There were one or two other passengers outside that rough morning. The Misses Penniman and Hawkins strode along the heaving deck like born sailors. They pretended not to notice Johnson as they passed, and Rex gathered that the old maids had been horrified in some way by the conduct of the man at the dinner table the evening before. They whisked briskly by, noses in the air, their tall, lean figures bent to the breeze.

As the hours passed the sea grew calmer, while overhead a bright sun warmed the deck. Rex was increasingly anxious to obtain the replies to his wires the previous evening, and scanned every steward or sailor that passed by them. Other passengers began to appear, some looking a bit uncomfortable from the harrowing effects of the first rough sea. Deck stewards walked about with tiny trays of tea and lemon for those so inclined. Rex judged from his own reactions that there weren't many who felt like eating or drinking every-

thing. There was too much uncertainty about the business. He further thought over the fact that they were to be about sixteen days on the water, the boat going by way of Honolulu and the Hawaiian Islands.

Toward noon he and George decided to make the round of the boat. They left the Inspector and Johnson still talking, and wandered slowly along. A game of shuffleboard was in progress, and the two boys joined in the fun. To Rex the game was simple, for he possessed a remarkable sense of judgment and timing. He rapidly defeated the most likely of the players, and then tackled George, who was quite proficient in the sport because of his long experience. Over the polished wood the heavy disks slid, and a large crowd of people gathered to watch the game. George won, finally; and they resumed their stroll feeling much better for the little exercise thus received. For a while they stood in the extreme point of the prow, looking out over the vast ocean that spread miles and miles on either side. A tap on Rex's arm caused him to turn, and he found a seaman standing by, a couple of sealed papers in his hand. He gave these to

the boy and departed. Rex was keen to open the messages, but refrained from doing so in George's presence.

"Radiograms from Dad," he said casually, and stuffed them in his pocket. There was no opportunity to examine them until a steward announced luncheon. Then he told George that he wanted to wash up, and left the young Englishman to his own company.

Once in his stateroom, with Butterball still in bed, he tore open the first of the messages. A look of satisfaction spread over his face as he read:

CAT AND ONE KITTEN HAVE DISAPPEARED  
LONG

It's meaning was clear enough: the "Alley-Cat" was no longer in Chicago, and a companion had disappeared with him. Rex felt certain that they were on the boat, but who, among all the passengers, might they be? He thought of the school teachers, and laughed to himself. No one would naturally imagine that those prim old maids were desperate thieves. Then he considered Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. He should have inquired about them, but he

was afraid to wire the police in New York for a report. He had no basis for his conclusion that they might not be all they seemed. Then there was Lawrence. He quickly tore open the second envelope.

LAWRENCE RECENTLY RETURNED FROM AN  
ENGAGEMENT IN LONDON NOW EN ROUTE  
FOR INDIA NO OTHER INFORMATION

EQUITY ACTORS INC

Here was something to think about. Lawrence recently in England and now bound for India. It looked as though a good many people were on their way to that strange land. Well, he'd keep quiet until there was something else to act upon. Telling the Inspector of his inquiry would not be necessary. With these thoughts he wished Butterball a rapid improvement in health, and ran up for lunch.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

MANY of the passengers, gathered in groups about the tables in the dining saloon, were curious as to the gauze and plaster that now replaced the bandage about the Inspector's head. He seemed unconscious of their stares and spoke casually to Rex and George as the three of them ate. Inwardly he was wondering who, among the people assembled there, had struck that murderous blow. There did not appear to be a suspicious face in the lot. Still, he could hardly expect the unknown assailant to give himself away. He smiled as he thought of the unsuccessful search that had probably been made of his person. He knew that the ruby was still safe.

Rex looked across the room at the Johnsons' table. Miss Penniman and her companion were there, as was the robust gentleman, but his wife was absent. Later the boy saw her

hurry in and take her place. He studied her carefully, and found her to be a handsome woman, quite a bit younger than her husband. She had seemed quite breathless upon her entrance, and now it looked as though she was explaining her delay to her husband. The latter grinned at her, and patted the back of her hand.

Luncheon was a much shorter meal than dinner on the previous evening. Few of the passengers chose to eat as heartily as they might, while many ate little or nothing at all. They had not yet become accustomed to the life aboard the great liner. Rex was among those who ate sparingly. He had visions of poor Butterball tucked away in his berth, and undoubtedly wishing that he had never taken his feet off solid ground.

A small boy at the table next to Rex provided those near him with considerable amusement. He had slipped a bulb and bladder arrangement under his father's plate, and when that gentleman would attempt to remove something from the plate, the boy would press the bulb and the plate would wobble up and down. Every one laughed, including the vic-

tim, who finally located the concealed bladder (a tiny rubber affair) and put the whole contraption in his pocket, to the grief of his small son. The boy, however, soon regained his good humor and took a "kazoo" from his pocket and began to make the most disturbing noises through it. This, too, was soon removed, but the parents of the boy had concluded their meal and allowed him to have his toy as soon as they had left the dining room. He could be heard blowing lustily upon it out on the deck.

The diversion created by the child's antics served to put most every one in a good humor. Gradually they retired from the large cabin to mingle once more in the smoking rooms and saloons, or to stand at the rail watching the swift passage of the blue-green waters of the Pacific thrust back by the ship's forging prow.

The Inspector again left the boys, signifying his desire to smoke his habitual after-meal cigar in the company of Mr. Johnson and several other men who joined him. This left Rex and George free to continue their inspection of the ship. The former asked George



to accompany him to the purser's office. "I'd like to get a look at the stateroom chart," he explained, as they turned toward that officer's cage.

The smiling Jap was busy behind the grating that fronted his office. He recognized Rex as the boy whose friend had met with an accident the night before, and slid the chart of the ship's accommodations through the slot in the wire caging. It consisted of three sections for the three decks, and each section was divided into minor sections with the staterooms all numbered and the name of the present occupant neatly lettered in red. Rex made a cursory inspection of the unimportant (to him) sections and then minutely examined the names of each individual that held a room in his own group of cabins. He noted, to his surprise, that Baron Hayaka, the Japanese statesman, had one of the staterooms, while the others were allotted as follows: Number 11, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson; Number 12, Mr. Howgate; Number 13, Misses Penniman and Hawkins; Number 14, Mrs. Sumner and maid; Number 15, Baron Hayaka; Number 16, Mr. and Mrs. Brown; Numbers 17-19, Cole,

Thomas, etc., while a large linen closet and service pantry occupied the space that would have been stateroom Number 18.

Rex satisfied himself as to the identity of each person in the section. Several, of course, were at first unknown to him, but as the purser (who seemed to know everybody) described them to him he recognized among them persons he had seen in the aisle, or in some other part of the ship. The Baron was known to him, as were Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and the two old maids.

He thanked the purser for his trouble, and then walked out upon the deck again with George. A plan was hazily forming in his mind, and he was anxious to think about it alone. Luck was with him, for they encountered a trio of young people who were seeking a fourth for bridge. They introduced themselves to Rex and George, and the latter assented to join in the game. Rex begged to be excused and the four went off to the card room.

A seat in a deck chair far to the stern of the boat afforded a fine place for concentrated thought, and Rex went thither in haste. He

sank back in the depths of the canvas backed chair, and was soon lost in rapt cogitation.

Perhaps half an hour passed in which he failed to move a limb. Then, with a spring, he was out of the chair and headed toward a stairway that would conduct him to the lower sections of the ship. After descending what seemed to be an endless winding of steps, he found himself close to the engine room from which the noise of the great turbines that propelled the vessel could be heard. A grimy oil wiper directed him to the quarters of the ship's carpenter. He emerged from the sea-going carpenter shop a short while afterward with several articles hidden under his jacket. These he carried to the stateroom and deposited under the berth in which Butterball still rested. The fat boy was wide awake, and began to question his chum on the meaning of his actions.

"You'll see later on," Rex informed him. "And now I want you to get up and get out in the air. You're just lazy, that's all."

"But I don't want to get up," Butterball said, "I'm not feeling any too good, as it is, and it's nice and comfortable in here. I can

see all the ocean I want to see right through the porthole."

"Well, you're going to get up anyway, you old seasick cow." And Rex charged upon the reluctant Butterball who put up a weak fight and then rolled out of the berth. Rex waited until the object of his attack was completely dressed, and then shoved him out of the cabin, following him to the deck. A few breaths of the salt air did help the sick boy, and soon he was striding about almost daring the sea to play more of its tricks upon him. He had not forgotten his binoculars and camera, and stood for a long time at the rail gazing at nothing through the glasses, or taking a nonsensical picture of the open water.

"The nice thing about this picture," he told Rex, "is that I won't have to take any more. When I left Mother asked me to send pictures of our different travels, and I can send a copy of this picture and label it: We are now on the Pacific, or: We are now on the China Sea, or: We are now in the Bay of Bengal. How's that for efficiency? It means a few extra prints. That's all." Then he asked seriously: "What was up last night?"

Rex told him of the events that had taken place, and of his messages to the States. Then he showed him the answers.

"What do you think of them?" he asked, when Butterball had finished reading.

"It does look as though Lawrence might have had the opportunity to hear about the ruby, and had determined to get it for himself. Or he might have been hired by a political gang over there. An actor would be ideal for the job of imitating Kal, and trying to frighten us into giving up the stone. But I can't believe that Lawrence is the man. And then, what about the 'Alley-Cat'? He might be on the boat, and if he is we're sure to run up against him. But he's a real crook, and probably as slippery as an eel. I've had a chance to see some of the women on this boat, and none of them looked like imitations. On the other hand, he may not be impersonating a woman. The only thing that makes me wonder whether he is or not is the fact that Long wired that another man was accompanying the 'Cat,' wherever he's bound. Maybe they're traveling as man and wife."

Rex listened thoughtfully to these remarks.

"I can't tell anything at all about the whole mess," he said slowly, "But we do know that some one on this boat is anxious to find the ruby, and I've got a scheme that may snare the bird we want." Then, in low tones, he described his plans to his chum. After outlining the details, he said: "Now don't forget. After dinner you leave us, saying you don't feel so well, and then go down to the state-room. Wait until about eleven o'clock and then slip out into that closet across the corridor. Then wait some more, and listen. If you hear anything hop back into the room. If you don't, wait until I call you. We'll arrange the room before dinner. They're bound to pick on our room, because they went through the Inspector's last night. Even though we'll be almost three weeks on this boat, it's a cinch that they'll want to lay their hands on the ruby as soon as possible. And we want to lay our hands on them, so that we can enjoy the rest of this trip."

From then on, until a short time before dinner, they amused themselves with shuffle-board and a brief "workout" in the tiny gymnasium that the ship maintained for its

passengers. It was just after this bit of gym exercise that Rex did an odd thing. He called the young instructor who attended the wants of the gym's patrons and asked if he might borrow the bladder from a basket ball. The man seemed surprised at this request, but having an extra bladder about, fetched it and gave it to the boy. Rex placed it in his pocket, and then he and his chum returned to the stateroom.

"Say," Butterball suddenly cried, "I forgot to tell you something that happened this noon. It was a little while after you left me for lunch, and I was lying there in the berth when I'm sure I heard some one at the door. In fact, I think I saw the knob turn. But I sneezed, like a fool, and whoever was there must have run away. I couldn't hear any footsteps, but I'm almost positive that there was an attempt to open the door."

Rex seated himself on the edge of the lower berth. This incident recalled something to his mind, but what it was he could not say. He had associated this statement of Butterball's with some other thing that he had noticed during the day. What he was seeking to re-

member flashed across his mind, at last, and he said to his pal:

"Come to think of it, I saw Mrs. Johnson hurry in late to the dining room. She seemed out of breath, as though she had been running. But that doesn't mean she had been trying to get in our room. Still, it does seem odd."

"You're getting to the point where you'll believe nobody's innocent around this tub," Butterball remarked with a laugh. "Soon you'll think that the Inspector is the guilty party."

"Well, let's go to work," Rex said. "We've got a lot to do."

With Butterball's assistance he arranged the bedding in the upper berth so that it gave the appearance of covering a human figure, with a cap stuffed with socks to resemble a head. Next they began to do the same thing to the lower berth, only this time Rex took the borrowed basketball bladder from his pocket and placed it carefully under the top sheet. To the bladder he attached one end of a long section of rubber hose, the thin kind that resembles macaroni. This was one of the arti-



cles he had obtained from the ship's carpenter. The other end of the hose he fastened to the outlet of a pair of small bellows, also belonging to the carpenter. He led the tubing out from under the sheet at the far side of the berth and thence through the crack in the hinge side of the bathroom door. By standing in the bathroom, and pressing gently on the bellows he was able to make the bladder rise and fall with the regularity of a sleeping man's lungs. In a poor light it would fool anybody, he felt certain.

This completed the arrangements for the evening, and they were free to dress at their leisure. The bellows had been hidden under the bed again, and the Inspector and George, who came in a bit later, were none the wiser.

When it was time to ascend to the dining saloon, the boys and Inspector MacAndrews went up in a body. Rex saw the Inspector stoop just as they were leaving and dust something over the door sills of both staterooms. It was a fine, gray powder, and the Inspector explained that 'if any one were to open the doors during their absence the powder would betray their act. What help that would be,

Rex could not surmise. Perhaps the Englishman was hoping to get a footprint.

Nothing out of the ordinary occurred during dinner, and soon after Butterball complained of a slight nausea and retired to his cabin. The events of the night were about to unfold.

## CHAPTER IX

### REX EFFECTS A CAPTURE

REX, the Inspector and George retired to the lounge directly following Butterball's departure. There they mingled with the passengers gathered in the lovely room, chatting and laughing and forming bridge games for the evening. The doughty Inspector could not stand the atmosphere for long, as he had not yet enjoyed his after-dinner smoke. In the company of Johnson, Lawrence, and several other men he wandered into one of the smoking rooms that gave off the main lounge. Rex and George were undecided what to do.

"I'm afraid that this trip is going to become beastly boring before long," the young Englishman said. "Despite that blasted ruby it seems rather a quiet voyage. I've even forgotten that some blighter gassed me last night. The bally old Inspector doesn't seem to give a hang whether they bother us or not. I wish

I knew where he's hidden the 'Tear of Blood.' "

"It's just as well that we don't know where it is," Rex answered sagely. "And as for excitement, well, you never can tell what's going to happen. Don't you forget that there are people on this boat who won't remain so docile if they fail to find the ruby. At any moment they're liable to try something dangerous. I really think that the Inspector's apparent disinterest is only shammed. He's watching everything like a hawk."

"Speaking of hawks," George said, "Look who's sitting behind us. Every time I see that woman I get the creeps. She makes me think of the old days when I was a chit in a very select academy. All the teachers in the blooming school looked just as she does. And I'll have you know that they made life miserable for me."

Rex laughed, as he recognized Miss Hawkins, to whom George was referring. "We have plenty of good teachers, and bad ones, too, on our side of the water. Most of them are peaches, regardless of how they look, but once in a while you bump up against a prize

pheasant who not only makes things miserable for you, but doesn't drive any knowledge into your skull either. In Hilton every school-teacher has to be approved by a special committee, which includes several students. That system has worked out pretty well, I'll tell you, and we've got a higher scholastic rating than any other city in the country."

From schools they drifted into a discussion of sports. George explained the intricacies of cricket and Rugby to Rex, while he in turn talked of baseball and basketball. Having exhausted the possibilities of sports, they walked over to the reading room and selected a few magazines to read. Rex found a new number of the *Cosmopolitan* while Lord George picked up a weird looking periodical called *Oriental Mysteries*. Soon they were engrossed in their particular choices and the time flew by without either of them looking up from their reading. Rex suddenly noted that the hands on his watch showed almost eleven-thirty, the time Butterball was supposed to enter the service closet. He called over to George:

"I'm going to hit the deck for a while. It's too stuffy in here. Want to come along?"

"No, thanks, old boy," George grinned, "I'm just in the spot where the Hindu magician is going to put the beautiful girl in a trance and carry her into the Cave of the Apes."

"Wow!" Rex cried, "I wouldn't tear you away from that for the world." He walked easily out of the reading room, through the lounge, and out to the deck. As it had been last night, the deck was empty and he was able to slip down to the stateroom without being noticed. He closed the door carefully behind him, took the bellows from their hiding place, and entered the bathroom. Then, with all the lights extinguished, he sat upon the edge of the tub to wait. Perhaps no one would come, but if they did they would certainly think that both boys were asleep. Especially when the bellows blew the bladder up and down, rustling the sheets and making a faint, sighing sound as if some one were sound asleep.

Minutes passed, without a sound to disturb the serenity of the peaceful cabin save the gentle lapping of the water on the side of the ship, and the ticking of the clock on the bureau

within the stateroom. Rex thought of Butterball cramped in the closet across the way. He had no real reason for putting the big fellow there except that in case of trouble he might be more help outside than inside the room.

The clock kept on ticking, and the waves continued to lap against the boat. Once in a while the hoarse orders of some officer would float down from the decks. Then, too, some of the passengers in adjoining staterooms could be heard retiring for the night. There was a time when the night steward passed down the corridor, and Rex held his breath as he waited for the discovery of his chum in the closet. But fortunately the steward had no cause to open the door.

Rex judged that the Inspector was still above in the smoking room and that George would be some time in finishing the story he had been reading.

Suddenly his nerves began to tingle. He had heard a very small noise at the door. With his heart beating rapidly he peered through the crack in the hinge end of the bathroom door and fastened his eyes upon the in-

terior of the cabin. Although it was a dark night, there was sufficient light from without the porthole to make part of the room faintly visible. Slowly he pressed the bellows and heard the almost lifelike breathing that resulted. Then the door of the cabin opened a bit. He continued pressing the bellows, and the door opened a bit wider. Then a figure, black and mysterious, stepped into the room. Who was it? Rex could not tell, but he saw the intruder glide quickly to the berths. A familiar odor began to assault Rex's nostrils. Now was the time, before the unknown discovered that there was no one in the berth. Without a word, every muscle tensed for action, he flung open the door and pounced upon the mysterious marauder. The battle was on.

As Rex jumped, the figure had faced about and so they met head on. Rex felt the soft fabric of satin under his grasp as he clutched at his adversary. Then he felt a face sinking beneath him, and at the same time a hard fist crashed full into his chest. With a neat precision the boy brought up his right and swung a hard blow into the other's face, now on a level with his own. He felt the unknown's



body recoil with a gasp of pain, and then charge furiously upon him. Rex's arms were locked behind him in an iron grip and he fell to the floor, kicking and squirming and tugging to free himself from those wiry hands that were creeping up to his throat. With a great lunge he managed to get one arm loose, and swung his fist wildly. Only a few of these blows were accurate, but those that landed were terrific. Rex put all his strength into it. Neither had uttered a word, and only their grunts and labored breathing could be heard in the room. Small as it was, they had so far knocked over no furniture.

The unknown suddenly relaxed his grip, and sprang to his feet. Rex dimly saw a sliver of flashing steel descending in a great arc. He rolled to one side and caught the murderous wrist that bore the knife in his firm hand. With a sudden wrench he twisted that skinny wrist, and heard the crunch of breaking bone at the same time that the knife fell to the floor.

A moan of pain escaped the unknown's lips, and Rex, seizing his opportunity, grasped his opponent around the waist and lifting him

off the floor, crashed him down on it. The body lay limp and inert beneath his touch. So far so good. But where was Butterball? Surely he must have seen the man enter the room.

Rex left the body for a moment and crossed the hall. The door of the closet was tight shut. He opened it, and saw Butterball in a state that rendered him helpless and accounted for his absence. He was sound asleep. Rex shook him, and then urged him quickly out of the closet and into their room. Then, after closing the door, he switched on the light.

Butterball, now awake, gasped, and even Rex felt shocked. There, unconscious upon the floor of the stateroom, lay *Miss Hawkins!*

"B-b-b-but what's she doing here?" Butterball stammered.

"*She* nothing," Rex answered him, and bending down stripped the wig from "Miss Hawkins's" head. The sleek black hair covering the skull of a young man was thus revealed.

"The 'Alley Cat'," Rex said, "Or the 'Kitten.' I don't know which. But let's get this

fellow out of the way. I want to surprise his roommate."

They drew the battered body into a sleeping position and bound the hands and feet with pieces of rope that Rex found in the closet across the corridor. Then, leaving Butterball to guard the captive, Rex straightened his clothing and went up to the Captain's quarters.

"I caught a man in my room," he told the astonished old seaman, "And I'd like to get him locked up in the brig. He's been traveling disguised as a woman—a Miss Hawkins—and of course we'll want to put the two of them in irons."

The Captain hastily ordered two ship's officers to come with him, and the whole party descended to Rex's cabin. They found the prisoner sullenly awake, and glaring fearfully at Butterball who smiled pleasantly back. The man looked ridiculous in his dress minus the wig.

"Who are you?" the Captain asked, but the man refused to answer.

"He's known as the 'Alley Cat,' I think," Rex said.

The prisoner laughed derisively at that, and thus convinced Rex that Miss Penniman was undoubtedly the famous 'Alley Cat.'

"Let's go," he suggested to the Captain, and the four moved away down the corridor. Just as they paused before the door of the "Alley Cat's" stateroom, the Inspector and George hastened up to them. Rex placed a finger on his lips as the Captain knocked at the door. But there was no answer. Again the Captain knocked, but no sound was heard within. Then he stepped back, and motioned to one of the officers to break in the door. The lithe Jap swung all his weight against the panel, but could not budge it. The noise of the impact, however, awakened the other passengers in the corridor, and other doors were opened and startled faces thrust out. Even the Baron looked out for a moment, but with the customary unconcern of his race, closed his door again. The others remained staring, however, much to the Captain's embarrassment.

The others tried their strength and weight against the door, but it refused to open. "Wait a minute," Rex said, and hastened

down the corridor. He returned followed by Butterball, robed in a flaming red dressing gown and looking like a trained elephant.

"Here, Butt," Rex said to him as they drew up before the door. "The Captain would like to see this door opened. What do you think?"

The huge boy smiled kindly. Here was a chance to do some real damage, and no danger of being blamed. Still smiling, he stepped back a pace or two and then battered his shoulder into the door. This was child's play. With a terrific rending of wood, solid wood, the door gave and Butterball tumbled head first into the room. The others looked in with haste, the Captain with a drawn revolver in his hand. But there was no need for firearms in this case. The room was empty.

After begging the passengers to return to their staterooms, the Captain, together with Rex, Inspector MacAndrews, George, and the flaming Butterball, went on deck to institute a minute search of the boat for the missing "old maid." The other crook was taken by the two officers to the ship's brig, and placed

under lock and key. The prisonlike cells in the brig had taken the place of the former iron staples to which prisoners in "irons" were chained.

The hunt for the "Alley Cat" endured for several hours, but the man was never found. The only conclusion to be drawn was that he had learned of his impending fate, and had jumped overboard. Another denizen of the underworld had disappeared, thanks to the brilliant thinking of young Rex, and still another one was safe in the brig. Not a bad night's work, as the Inspector put it when later the four travelers were assembled in his cabin.

Rex told the story of the evening's adventure, and was congratulated by the Inspector on his plan for catching the thieves at their work.

"Maybe we'll have some peace now," Butterball said, "with those birds out of the way. I wonder how they ever came to hear of the ruby?"

"That's yet to be explained," the Inspector answered, "but perhaps tomorrow we'll be able to pump this chap that Rex nabbed.

Now, all of you, off to bed. We'll go over the whole thing in the morning."

But Rex couldn't sleep that night. He was still wondering about Hilary Lawrence and the conversation that the actor had had with Johnson on the previous night. What had that "We'll get it yet" referred to. And, as Butterball had said: "How did the 'Alley Cat' learn of the transport of the ruby?" It was just as Rex was turning this problem over in his mind, that he heard his chum in the lower berth cry, "Rex! . . . *Rex!*" He looked out of the berth, and there, peering in through the porthole was the grinning face of Kal!

## CHAPTER X

### A LESSON IN STAGECRAFT

THE next morning the boys hopped out of bed to confer upon the singular appearance of the Grinning Ghost. Neither doubted that the face had been there, leering in through the porthole, for a few seconds, and then vanishing—where? It was physically impossible for a man to have been outside that little round window, for there was nothing there but the slippery side of the liner. True, the deck was not far above, but it was too far for a man to have hung down in some fashion from the rail. Butterball thought that some one might have lowered himself from the rail on a rope, but this seemed hardly probable. There was too much risk, and too little to gain. Kal, or whoever was masquerading as Kal, must know by now that his sinister appearances were not frightening the boys. Obviously the rogue was trying to keep up some sort of a



game in order to hide the real reason behind the attempted theft of the ruby. Whoever was doing this knew that the ruby was sacred, and that it was being carried to India for political and religious reasons.

The boys mulled all this over, and arrived at the very general conclusion that the thieves were not concerned with the symbolic value of the ruby. They were after the money that it represented.

Inspector MacAndrews and George joined the boys a short while before breakfast. He was in a fine humor, and was only too happy to acknowledge that Rex had landed the crooks very cleverly indeed.

"I couldn't have done better myself," he added, after praising the lad, and that was about the nicest thing that he could have said.

George was interested in the bladder and bellows idea, and asked Rex where he had discovered this novel way of imitating the breathing of a sleeping man.

"Well," Rex asked in turn, "didn't you see that kid with the platelifter in the dining room yesterday? I simply figured that the idea could be used on a larger scale."

"Now you have to find some use for the kazoo," Butterball laughed.

They all went up for breakfast, and noted the vacancy at the Johnsons' table. The thought of the man who had flung himself into the sea rather than be taken prisoner by the law was uppermost in most everybody's mind. The story of the capture of the lone crook had reached all parts of the ship, and the Inspector's table was the object of many piercing glances.

"Now I understand who was responsible for this," MacAndrews was saying, and he pointed to the plaster on his head. "Those 'women' saw me leave the smoking room, and one of them ran about the other side of the ship, just as Butterball suggested."

Their talk, for the balance of the meal, centered about the exciting events of that memorable night. Rex told the others of the appearance of Kal in their porthole, and the Inspector seemed incredulous. "It's difficult to picture a man going to that extremity to frighten us," he said thoughtfully.

"But doesn't it prove that our troubles are not over as yet?" asked Rex, and then added,

"Of course it does. That's why they went to all that trouble, although it may have been an easy trick. That face last night was sort of a portent that there's more behind all this than meets the eye. And whoever Kal is, he's a mighty clever man. You'd think he was laughing at us for thinking that the catch last night was all there was to it."

"I'd thought that myself," the Inspector admitted, "But I was hoping that you might not think of it. You've had enough excitement for three young chaps."

"Nonsense, dear uncle," Butterball put in with a grin, "We live on excitement."

They joshed each other back and forth until it was time to stroll out on deck. Rex and the Inspector decided to have a little talk with the prisoner in the brig, and soon obtained permission from the Captain. This was necessary, for on the high seas the Captain of a vessel is the sole representative of the law, the law of ships and sailors.

Behind the iron bars of the cell sat the disconsolate figure of the man whom Long had named the "Kitten." There was a ferocity about his thin features that was all the more

marked now that he had been stripped of the dress and makeup of Miss Hawkins. The sailors had clad him in some old dungarees that were fitting apparel for his lowly cell.

The Inspector smiled at him through the bars.

"What did you hope to find in that room last night?" he asked the man casually.

"None of your business," was the surly reply.

"Come now, my good fellow," the Inspector said soothingly, "That sort of thing isn't going to get you any place. If you speak up we might be able to use our influence when your case comes before a court."

"That don't bother me none," the crook said with a snarl, "You ain't got nothing on me, except that I broke into your cabin. Well, I'll take my chances. I'm no squealer."

The Inspector gave up, and at a nod from Rex led the way out.

"Can't get any help from a chappy like that," he said as they climbed to the deck.

"We did get some help," Rex assured him. "Didn't he say that he was no squealer. Well, to an American that means that some one is

in league with him, and that he won't turn evidence against that person. That proves to us that there are others mixed up in this, and I'd like to bet they're on this boat."

"They must be," the Inspector agreed, "if we consider that vision that you had last night, or rather, that apparition."

"What do you think we ought to do about it, Inspector?" Rex asked.

"I don't think we can do very much," was the slow answer, "but the ruby is still safe, and I'm sure that we'll have no more violence to cope with, inasmuch as two of the thieves are gone."

Rex thoughtfully considered this. To him it seemed that the next important step to take was to discover the others of the group working against them. But how could he do it? Then he remembered Johnson and Lawrence, and the conversation they had had one night. It was barely possible that they were behind it all.

And there was Mrs. Johnson. Had she been the person whom Butterball believed to be outside his door that day? Well, he'd keep his eyes open for future developments.

Nor did he fail to consider also the other passengers on the boat. There was nothing to indicate that some unknown was not the guilty party. He had been impressed by Johnson and Lawrence because they were speaking acquaintances. But their actions might have been entirely innocent, and those of Mrs. Johnson, too. He decided to direct his whole attention to the solution of the mystery that surrounded the appearance of Kal. It did not seem likely that a face could float about in air. That floating motion was probably an optical illusion created by the luminescent greenness that colored the features. Where had he seen something like that before? Somewhere in his memory an illusion like that of the idol's face was hidden. Perhaps he could bring it to the light by concentrating his thoughts on that one subject.

He was now alone on the deck, that is alone as far as the Inspector and the other boys were concerned. They had vanished to some other part of the ship, and Rex stood idly by the rail. The sea still retained its calm, and the sun shone as bright as ever over the water. Wherever his eyes wandered Rex saw the

grinning, hideous face of Kal as he had seen it that night through the porthole. So it was that he started when a hand was laid upon his shoulder. Turning about he found Hilary Lawrence smiling at him, and just at that moment he had a flash of the thing that he was seeking to remember. Three words kept burning through his brain as he turned to smile back at the actor. Three words, words that might explain the apparition that was Kal. And here was the very man who might help him.

"Good morning, Mr. Lawrence," he said.

"Morning, Cole," the actor responded, "I want to congratulate you on the capture of that sneak thief last night. Thrilling, absolutely thrilling."

Rex blushed. "That wasn't much to do. I found him in my room, and nabbed him." He knew that the story of the bellows and bladder had not been spread abroad, as the Captain and all those concerned thought it best not to mention the fact that the crook had been expected.

Lawrence went on to discuss the capture with the boy. "Just like a play," he sug-

gested, "One of those mystery plays, you know, where the villain is always in disguise as something or other."

Here was an unexpected opening for the boy.

"Mr. Lawrence," Rex asked, "Did you ever hear of a play called 'The Last Warning'?"

Lawrence seemed startled. "Did I hear of it? Why, I certainly did. I played the leading rôle in it five years ago. It was the only play of that kind that I ever appeared in as a star."

This unexpected admission pleased Rex. Now he could find out all that he wanted to know. "I saw it," he said, "and I liked it. There were plenty of thrills in it, believe me. Of course I'd forgotten that you were in it, but it was so long ago that I guess you can excuse me for being unable to remember the cast. But there was one effect in it that I have often wondered about. In one scene the supposed ghost of the old man walked across the stage. All the audience could see was the

"The Last Warning" was a "hit" mystery play produced several seasons ago in New York City.



face, and it certainly gave every one the creeps."

"I recall that," Lawrence said reminiscently.

"Well," Rex continued, "I've often wondered how that effect was created? How that face moved across the stage, and what trick was used to make it seem so real?"

"Why, it was very simple," Lawrence said with a chuckle. "I'll gladly tell you all about it." And together they walked away, with the actor illustrating with his hands the method used to create the face.

\* \* \* \* \*

That evening Rex met Butterball in their stateroom. There was an excited gleam in his eyes as he clapped his chum heartily on the back.

"Butt, old man, I think I know a few things about our friend Kal," he exclaimed, "And if he reappears on this boat I'm going to nab him. Our chief difficulty is that we never have been close to him. He relied on the strangeness of his first appearance to petrify us, and in the other appearances he was always pretty far away and near an exit. Now

that I think of it, that time we were in the hotel in Chicago he must have gone up the fire escape instead of down. Naturally we looked down, while he was climbing to the roof. He's a mighty smart individual, but he's playing a losing game. Two of his men are gone already, and we're going to get his nibs sooner or later."

"What makes you so sure?" Butterball demanded.

"Well, he hasn't been able to search this stateroom yet, and I suppose he'll be all the more anxious to do so now that we've caught the 'Kitten' and scared the 'Alley Cat' into jumping off the boat. We'll make him think that we don't want this room to be entered, and then we'll pretend to slip up and give him a chance. We'll have to make believe that this room is under constant guard, and therefore, from now on, one of us is going to remain in it all the time. We'll take turns, and thus be able to get our meals and everything without seeming too suspicious."

"Supposing he doesn't fall for the bait?" asked the fat boy.

"I've got another plan in that case. What

we want to do is to lay our hands on him, but because he keeps so far away we don't stand a chance of jumping him when he shows up in the dark as Kal. Of course we could shoot at him with a revolver, but he's probably prepared for that with a bullet proof outfit or something. And then the noise of a gun would throw the whole ship into excitement. We want to avoid that. But there's something else we can use. Remember how we used to play with those South American weapons made of rope and metal balls?"

"You mean those bolos that you swing around your head and then fling at an object? They'll wrap themselves right around an animal's neck and choke it to death."

"That's the apparatus," Rex told him, "I'm going to make one of those and practice with it. Then one night when old man Kal puts in an appearance I'm going to give him the surprise of his life."

Rex then called the Inspector and George in and told them of his plan to keep the state-rooms under constant watch, particularly the one that had not been searched yet.

"A good idea," MacAndrews said, "and

we'll all take a turn at staying here for a certain time each day. Then, after the man who's trying to steal the ruby is all primed, we'll work some kind of a ruse to empty the cabin and let him search away." Then he stopped abruptly and rubbed his cheek. "No," he continued, "I don't think that that's such a good plan after all, come to think of it. First of all, it's a bit obvious, and second of all I'm convinced that they're sure that the stone isn't hidden in our belongings but on one of our persons. When that man entered the cabin the other night he must have thought that the two of you were in it. That gas he had with him was to make you sleep soundly so that he could search your clothes. In other words, we've got to guard ourselves and not the staterooms."

Rex agreed. He hadn't thought of it in that light, but on second consideration it seemed as though the Inspector was right. "Well," he thought to himself, "I'm going to make my bolo anyway. It's just the thing for this kind of trouble."

They all dressed and ascended to the dining saloon. After dinner they separated as usual,

the Inspector to his smoking room, Rex and Butterball to the deck, and George to a bridge game with the young folks he had met the day before.

The evening presented no new developments in the tangle, and the boys retired early, followed a bit later by the Inspector. Nothing suspicious occurred during the night, and they all enjoyed some ten hours of uninterrupted repose.

The next morning Rex returned the implements he had borrowed from the ship's carpenter, and secured a length of thin rope from him and had him fashion on the ship's lathe two balls of heavy wood. These were drilled through the center so as to allow the passage of the rope ends which could be knotted and thus made to hold the balls. Rex commandeered a quantity of light machine oil from one of the engineers, and used this to soften the rope. After spending considerable time in the manufacture of this weapon, he proceeded to obtain permission from the Captain to practice in a vacant corner of the vast forward hold of the ship. There, unobserved, he whipped and threw the home made bolo

until some of his former skill returned. From a distance of about fifty feet he was able to wrap the odd weapon about a chalk mark on a steel post. He had made this mark about the height of a man's neck.

There was a trick in whirling the rope that soon evidenced itself. He found that if he gave a twist of his wrist just before letting the rope whistle toward its mark, the weapon would fly straight and true. When the rope hit the post, the balls would whirl around with great speed until there was no rope left to wind. The whole operation took considerable strength, but Rex's six-foot frame was muscled with a perfection that came of long exercise on the gridiron and in the gymnasium. Throwing the bolo was great sport for him, even though his real purpose was not to amuse himself but to put his ability to the test against the Grinning Ghost.

The days passed, with a portion of each day devoted to practice with the South American weapon. The rest of the time, Rex carried the supple rope wrapped about his waist, under his jacket. He had seen pictures of South American *vaqueros* who carried the

bolo in this manner. One jerk and the rope fairly leapt into one's hand ready for instant use.

The weather had proved extremely mild throughout, and most of the passengers had become used to the gentle roll of the ship as it cut through the blue waters of the Pacific. They were nearing the Hawaiian Islands, and the gradual increase in mildness in the temperature was noticed and appreciated by all. Rex often thought of his Dad, enduring the cold and frost of windswept Illinois, and wished that he had come along with them on the journey.

George and the Inspector still continued to be wonderful companions. The Inspector would sit and tell them tales of his adventures at Scotland Yard, while George would often lapse into whimsical reminiscences of his days at school, and of the pranks they had played on the masters and teachers. Butterball had taken to writing his impressions of the sea voyage, although these were not part of the material he was to send back to his paper. He found constant use for the varied instruments that he had brought along, and when he

was not writing would strut about the deck snapping pictures or gazing through his powerful binoculars. One day the *Empress* passed a liner bound for the United States, and Butterball was in his glory. His glasses were the most powerful on board, and he was the center of an admiring throng who passed the binoculars back and forth, examining the other craft. On the morrow they would stop at Honolulu, and the passengers were all agog at the prospect of viewing this miraculous South Sea paradise.

But that night several things occurred that took the boys' minds off the subject of Hawaii. To begin with, a terrific storm, uncommon in those waters, blew up and the *Empress* was tossed about as though it were a tiny canoe. Gigantic waves rose high above the decks, and thundered over the prow of the vessel. It was in the midst of this fury, with the rain pelting down on the decks and vivid flashes of lightning illuminating the black skies, that Rex and Butterball decided to brave the elements and watch the storm from the heaving afterdeck.



## CHAPTER XI

### STRONG-ARM STUFF

"COME on, Butt," Rex had said, as they sat in the cabin trying to keep the chairs from sliding from one part of the room to another, "Let's go up on deck and see the fun."

Butterball had demurred. "I'm not so sure but what we'll get seasick again," he said.

"Nonsense," Rex had retorted. "We're certainly used to this motion by now, even if we've had only one day of rough weather. I'd rather be up there than down here, anyway."

So Butterball had fortified himself with a couple of pills, and joined Rex in donning oil-skins and heavy overshoes. Rex found that his slicker was a bit large and unwieldly, so he used the bolo rope to fasten the coat about him, tucking the ends of the cord in at either side. Thus this improvised belt served to take up the slack in the slicker. They marched defiantly out of the cabin, and the huge But-

terball nearly knocked over the little Japanese Baron who was wobbling to his stateroom. After setting the Oriental safely on his feet, with many bows from him in return, they ascended to the deck where the real fury of the gale was visible.

The wind-lashed rain stung their cheeks as they forced their way along the deck, clutching anything handy that would serve to keep them standing. Above the howl of the gale they could hear different officers bawling orders to the seamen who were making fast all movable objects.

"Whoopee," Butterball sang out at the top of his lungs, "Ain't this something?" Then the boat seemed to sink with the velocity of a high speed elevator down a shaft, and the late "whoopee" maker was heard to emit a yowl of protest. "S-s-s-say," he called to Rex, "who told it to do that?"

Slowly they made their way along the deck, their backs bent to the terrific pressure of the wind. At a point not far from the prow they halted and, holding on lest they be swept off the deck, watched the turbulent black water plunging about in mountainous waves. As

each wave hit the ship, there was a great booming sound followed by the hiss of the receding water as it washed off the deck. The rain continued its downpour, while great forks of lightning crackled in the distance, followed by equally great claps of thunder. It was a wonderful sight—that roaring water lighted by the yellowish flares of the lightning forks—and the boys were satisfied to become soaked to the bone as they regarded the scene.

“Those pills must be all right,” Butterball called. “I feel fine.” Again the liner tipped dizzily, and the fat boy sat right down on the wet deck with a resounding smack. “Not so fine,” he amended as he rose ponderously to his feet.

“Nice night for whoever’s trying to sleep,” Rex called, “or can you imagine a card game now? Be more like playing leap frog.”

So they stood until the watch on Rex’s wrist showed ten-thirty. The storm’s force continued unabated, and the sheer majesty of this display held the boys riveted to the spot. They might never again have a chance to witness such a scene.

At length Butterball grew tired of falling

down and standing up again. He had been tumbling with every quiver of the boat, lacking the balance that Rex could maintain owing to his lesser weight.

"I'm going back," he shouted.

"Not I," Rex answered. "This is too much fun. I'll be down later." He watched the huge bulk of his friend start down the deck. The big lad had gone about seventy-five feet when he oddly collapsed. Rex stared. The ship had not taken a sudden lurch, so there was no reason for this fall. Then, hovering over the prostrate form he saw the shining, greenish face of the Grinning Ghost. Even as Rex saw this horrible sight, the face descended closer to the fat boy's fallen figure. Rex acted in an instant. With a wrench he tore the rope from about his waist. In a second it was free, and he whirled it madly over his head. The wind was blowing across the boat, and he calculated that he would have to throw the bolo far out, and trust that it would carry in toward the place where Butterball lay. The rope whizzed as he whirled it, fearful to let go until that ferocious face should rise high enough above the deck. He watched it move

about and then it seemed to soar heavenward for a few feet. Now, if ever, was his chance.

The bolo whipped through the air, propelled by the force of every muscle in Rex's body. Even as he threw it, the boy charged forward, slipping and falling along the heaving, slippery deck. He heard a gasp rise above the roar of the storm, and saw a flailing, shadowlike form jumping and shaking, trying to dislodge the rope that had coiled about it.

Rex crouched, and gathering all his strength, sprang toward and fell on top of the "thing." He felt the wet fabric of black oilskins in his grip, as he hugged the struggling figure. His eyes saw the luminous head turn from one side to the other without changing a single feature. Always that awful grin was there. As they rolled about the deck, there came a tinkling of glass, and the green light vanished. All was dark, now, and the two locked figures twisted and squirmed. Rex gave a heave of his broad shoulders, and found himself on top of the figure. A bony hand clawed at his face, raking sharp nails, long nails, over the skin and

the boy could feel the warm blood begin to trickle down his cheeks.

With a savage cry, he raised his arm and brought his fist down in the direction of the figure's head. His bare knuckles crunched against something hard, unyielding, and he felt a great pain in his hand. He hadn't counted on hitting iron. Again he swung, this time in the direction of the body, and sank his pained fist into the "thing's" side. Another punch, this time from the left hand, landed on the other side above the waist. There was a grunt, a sudden twist, and Rex found himself flying through the air and landing against the deck with a stunning crash. In an instant he had sprung again, this time feeling a pair of very human legs in his locked arms. They rolled over again only to fall against something on the deck. Butterball's body! Rex wished that the big boy could help him, but there was no movement from that limp pile of flesh and bone.

Again they rolled over, with the bony hands of his assailant clawing again and again at Rex's torn face. He freed one arm and caught hold of the "thing's" threshing arms,

but another twist from the dark figure sent him flat upon the deck. Blindly he charged back, and threw his full weight upon the smaller frame of the unknown. They crashed to the deck, and this time Rex's hand felt the iron or steel covering that protected the "thing's" head. He tore at it, and it slid off. Now things were better. He put all his strength into a terrific punch from his left hand, and felt it strike human flesh. Again he punched, and yet again. In a mad frenzy he clubbed and clouted long after the figure beneath him had ceased to offer resistance. This was the fiend who had hurt—perhaps killed—his chum! Crack! He landed another blow, unconscious of the bloody gore that covered his knuckles. Then, as he was poised for another swing, the bright beam of a flashlight cut the darkness.

"Hullo!" called Inspector MacAndrews, "what's up?" Rex could see George standing beside him.

"Just giving our friend Kal what he deserves," Rex said weakly. He had not even looked at the unconscious object of his attack. His lungs were bursting, and his heart beat

wildly. "Help Butterball," he said, and pointed to where the fat lad lay a few feet distant. George immediately leaped to Butterball's side, but the Inspector remained staring at the person Rex had conquered. The steady beam of the flashlight played on an up-turned face, unmistakable in its appearance, even though battered and bloody. The face belonged to . . . *Baron Hayaka!* He lay sprawled on his back, clothed in black oilskins and not far away was the weird looking mask he had been wearing. It grinned up from the wet deck, and seemed to mock them in sinister silence.

Just then something rolled to the Inspector's feet as the boat was lifted on the crest of a wave. Looking down he noticed a tiny flashlight. He stooped and picked it up, and the mask as well, observing that the lens of the small light was shattered. Bits of green glass still clung to the rim of the lens. He noted, too, that a narrow steel band was passed about the thin chest of the fallen Baron, and that a hook-like arrangement protruded from the front of it. A slot in the barrel of the flashlight appeared to be about the right size



to fit the hook. All this he noticed, and smiled to himself. An old trick, at that.

Rex, now recovered, and George were bending over Butterball. He had been struck on the temple with some blunt instrument, but the blow had not killed him for he was still breathing. The boys had hopes of bringing him to in short order, and were working on him when the Inspector, after slipping a pair of handcuffs over the wrists of the prostrate Jap, went for help. He soon returned with the Captain and an ordinary seaman. They were struck dumb at the sight that was revealed by their flashlights, or the occasional flashes of lightning.

The storm gave signs of letting up, although the ship still pitched and rolled, buffeted by the heavy seas. The rain had stopped entirely, but oilskins were still necessary because of the tremendous jets of spray that leaped almost completely over the steamship.

"Stow that man in the brig," the Captain ordered. Then he turned to the Inspector. "There's been more trouble on this trip than I've ever encountered before on any single passage. That man is a Japanese diplomat,

and this is a Japanese liner, but I'm hanged if I don't keep him in irons until the story is cleared up. Wonder what it's all about?" He looked at the Inspector shrewdly.

"You won't get into trouble over this, Captain," the Inspector assured him. "There's some sort of politics at the bottom of it. But politics can't protect any man who assaults another as this man has done." They both looked over at Butterball, still lying on the deck and now moaning feebly.

Suddenly the object of their attention sat up. "Where is that mule?" he asked, "I'll kick the daylights out of it." Then he noted his surroundings. "Ow!" he murmured, and rubbed his eyes. "What happened?"

They told him, and he began to remember.

"That's right," he said, "Rex and I were watching the storm, and then I left him. The next thing I knew, I didn't know anything."

He looked across the deck to where the sailor was hoisting the Jap to his shoulders, ready to carry him to the brig. The man was still unconscious.

"So that's our Grinning Ghost," Butterball

said, after Rex had told him of the struggle. "Well, you certainly did a mighty fine job on him." He clasped Rex's hand, and the latter winced at the pressure. He had forgotten, in the excitement, that his hand had been crushed when he hit the mask, that was made of aluminum instead of the steel he had thought it was. He decided to see the ship's doctor, who placed the injured hand in a cast, and after assuring himself that his chum was all right, was safely tucked in his berth and went soundly to sleep. The explanations would wait until the morning.

## CHAPTER XII

### MACANDREWS DOFFS HIS DERBY TO REX

A CLEAR, blue sky          sunlight .          the  
Hawaiian Islands dim blobs of grayish green  
in the distance . . the great white liner  
leaving foamy trails in the wake of its twin  
screws.

Rex awoke to find the sun pouring through  
the porthole and over his berth. Beneath him  
the steady snores of his chum sounded the  
"All's well" signal. He could hear the In-  
spector and George moving about in the bath.  
With one hand he rubbed his eyes, and then  
stretched his limbs painfully. His other  
hand, rigid in its cast, was lying helpless on  
the cover. It reminded him of his adventures  
on the preceding night. The Grinning Ghost!  
Was it possible that he had laid that ghost  
at last? And what had led the Baron Hayaka  
to assume the horrid form of Kal?

He asked himself these questions, and then

hopped out of the berth. Perhaps the Inspector would be able to shed some light on the subject. He marched into the bath, and was greeted by the two Englishmen.

"Well, well, well," boomed MacAndrews, "if it isn't the conquering hero. How do you feel, lad?"

"Not bad at all," Rex answered. "Only," he added, "this hand of mine feels pretty useless."

"It wasn't so useless last night," George said, beaming through the lather that covered his face. "I only wish I had been able to put in a wallop or two at that Jap."

"Did you know that the Baron was the man with whom we had to deal?" asked the Inspector.

"No, I wasn't certain about him," Rex replied truthfully. "I had an idea that it might be he, but I couldn't think of any reason for his doing this sort of thing. I did know about the mask, though. Lawrence explained that for me."

"What do you mean?" George wanted to know.

"Well, I remembered having seen a mystery

play called 'The Last Warning.' In one of the scenes the stage was perfectly dark, and then this greenish face of an old man, supposedly a ghost, began to move across the stage. It sent the audience into hysterics, for it was the most ghastly thing that you'd ever expect to see. I often wondered how that effect was created and a while ago I remembered about it and asked Lawrence. I thought that he, being on the stage, might be able to tell me the trick, but it so happens that he played the lead in that very play. That was only a coincidence.

"It seems that the actor who played the part of the ghost wore a black cloak that completely covered his body. About his chest was fastened a strap holding a small flashlight with a green lens. His face was all made up, of course, and in the dark, when the light was snapped on, the face became visible. Because the light shone up toward the face, the rest of his body was not seen. Lawrence said that any one could play the same trick if he was far enough away from the persons who saw him. That's what made me realize that the face of Kal could not be something magical. I'll con-

fess that for awhile I was believing that there was some sort of magic behind it.

"When I was fighting with the Baron, I knew that he wore a mask, but I didn't think it was more than plaster or papier mâché. That's how I came to break a bone in this hand. I hit him right square on his metal false face. Incidentally, I'm sure that what we saw in the porthole that night was the mask and light hung from above on a thin wire."

"Just a moment," the Inspector begged, and retired to his cabin, returning with the bolo that Rex had used. "What on earth is this?" he demanded.

Rex explained the use of the rope weapon to him.

"By Jove!" the older man cried, "I doff my derby to you, young fellow. Who else would have thought of that kind of a weapon for snaring the Grinning Ghost, as Butterball calls him?"

Rex explained his views, telling of his notion that the use of a gun would not be effective.

"Right again," the Inspector cried. "That wily Jap was literally covered with a set of

fine steel plates. I could see where your fists had dented them, but no bullet would have reached his body. Naturally he was prepared for gun play, but not for this rope affair."

"What about the 'Alley Cat'? Where does he come in?" George asked the Inspector.

"Hired. That's all," MacAndrews replied. "The Jap hired those two men to help him get the ruby. And that brings up another point that has been puzzling me no end. What does that fellow want with the ruby?"

Rex shook his head. "I can't imagine, unless . ." Then he stopped for a moment. "Do you think that the situation in India might be of interest to Japan?"

"I don't know. Never heard of it," was the Inspector's rejoinder. "But I'll find out, by Jove! I'll wireless London."

With that the subject was dropped and the boys hurried to finish dressing and go up for breakfast. Rex found it necessary to fling a wet towel in his chum's face before that worthy would consent to arise.

"I'm an injured party," he complained. "Doesn't that entitle me to a little more sleep?"



"Not on your life," Rex answered, "I'm more injured than you are. Get up, now, you lazy bozo."

Butterball arose, yawned, stretched his arms and knocked a row of books from a wall shelf in the process.

At breakfast there was no stir, as there had been the last time a thief had been caught, for in this case no one knew that the Baron was resting in the brig. The talk mostly concerned the city of Honolulu which they were nearing. Outside the palm-fringed shores of the islands were already visible. In the background the mountains rose in craggy majesty, slumbering volcanoes ready to pour hot streams of molten rock down their sides. It was a magnificent picture, and Butterball had armed himself with his camera before coming to the table.

Following breakfast the boys wandered out on the deck to survey the lovely vista that greeted all those whose eyes were directed toward the island group. Only a few miles more, and they would enter Honolulu Bay, beloved of American song writers, most of whom have never seen the place.

As they stood on the deck, or leaned against the railing, Rex and the Inspector discussed the peculiar aspects of the case at hand. They had gone down to see the Baron, but the Jap had maintained a strict silence. He sat in his cell with his battered yellow face inscrutable and calm. Only his eyes seemed to be alive as they burned with a fanatical fire. He did not speak even to the occupant of the other cell, who also held to his close mouthed policy. No one had been able to get a word out of them. They accepted their food in silence, making no requests.

The Inspector had also spoken to the Captain who told him that both prisoners would have to be handed over to a court of law. He added that the first prisoner was undoubtedly an American, and that he would be dropped at Honolulu. The Jap would be taken to Japan. It looked as though the mystery of the Grinning Ghost had been solved; but there still remained the problem of why the Jap had acted as he did.

A long wireless message had been prepared in code by the Inspector, but it was decided to cable London from Honolulu instead of

making use of the ship's radio facilities. The reply would be picked up at Yokohama a week later.

Soon the great liner was cutting through the crystal waters of the bay. Native canoes drifted about the huge ship filled with curious brown-skinned beings, naked save for loin cloths. They gibbered wildly at the passengers who leaned over the railing to watch them. Rex and his party were among this group.

"Funny critters, aren't they?" Butterball remarked. "Look at the way they wear flowers in their hair. And see how skillfully they guide those long, outriggered canoes. I'd like to see them using surfboards." The fat boy was busy snapping pictures as he spoke.

With a great clanking of chains the ship came to anchor. The boys saw the sullen "Kitten" being led to a waiting boat, and soon he was being carried ashore to be handed over to the port authorities. But their attention was not diverted long by this incident. They were anxious to go ashore and visit the famed city of the Pacific. A launch was ready for the passengers, and the four travelers managed to squeeze into the first group to go

ashore. Upon their arrival at the long white quay that jutted out into the bay, they were greeted by chattering natives who placed about their necks the symbolic "lei," a garland of red flowers that was the Hawaiian sign of welcome to strangers.

"Gosh," Rex exclaimed, "I feel foolish with this bunch of flowers around the old neck. Makes me think of the movies that we used to see. The South Sea hero always had these things wrapped around him." He turned to see Butterball blushing a bright scarlet as a little native girl poked her finger in his "tummy" to see if he really was that big or whether he had a flock of pillows concealed under his coat.

The Inspector and George were interested in the scrambling natives, every one of whom seemed to have something to sell. Fruits, beads, novelties of every sort were produced and offered for sale. Among the natives were a number of white beach combers; human derelicts who lived in shanties on the warm sands, and eked out a bare existence from the flotsam and jetsam that was thrown up on the beaches by the tide.

There were a number of United States officials on the quay, too, waiting for the mails, or merely curious to see who had arrived on the boat.

"Look," George called. "There are some of those surf riders you wanted to see, Butterball."

Sure enough, far away from the quay a crowd of black specks was being swept in to shore on the crests of the waves that rolled in to the beach. Some of the specks could be seen standing up on their boards, waving their hands at those who waited on the shore. It was a marvel of grace and balance the way those men and women could speed along on the surface of the white-capped water. Some of the peculiar outriggered canoes, looking like giant spiders, were riding in in the same fashion. Occasionally one would tip over, and there would be a mad splashing by the passengers thus spilled.

"Let's try that," Butterball cried, and soon they were being driven to one of the beaches in a ramshackle carriage that had seen better days. Upon reaching the beach they found places to disrobe and don the swimming suits

that they had brought with them from the ship.

"This is a bit of all right," cried George, as they dived into the seething waves, or forced their way far out in the shallow water.

"Right you are," Rex spluttered, as he arose, sniffing and snorting from the depths of a great whitecap that had leaped over his surging body.

"Seems as though the tide has risen," laughed George, with a wink. He was pointing to what seemed to be a whale floating on the water, but what was really Butterball, reclining peacefully and emitting jets of water from his mouth. His peace didn't last long, however, for a wave dashed over him and he was forced to stand on his feet, gasping for breath.

Of course they had to try the famous surfboards, and located three that were rented to them by a native boy. They dragged the boards far out from shore and then, after several unsuccessful attempts, found themselves rushing landward, borne on a hissing wave that deposited them laughing upon the sands. The Inspector had been watching their

sport from the beach, for he had not wanted to enter the water. He sat in a comfortable chair under an umbrella, talking with Mr. Johnson and his wife who had come along with them.

The boys finally tired of their fun, and dressed to rejoin their party. The brief relaxation from the tedium of the boat had put every one in good spirits. Rex's hand had not pained him at all, and the plaster had remained set. He knew that several days, possibly weeks, would go by before the crushed bone would mend.

Soon they were back in the lovely city, where they met Hilary Lawrence strolling about, drinking in the perfumed atmosphere of the streets.

"Let's charter a car and see the plantations this afternoon," the actor suggested, as they were having luncheon in Honolulu's chief hotel. "We've got until four this afternoon to idle about here," he added. It was quickly decided to do this, and the clerk at the hotel secured a Ford touring car and a driver for them. They piled in, and were soon traveling over smooth, white roads to the distant planta-

tions. The horrors of the Grinning Ghost episode were quickly forgotten for the loveliness of the scenery drew every bit of their attention. The rolling uplands were colorful bits of emerald and yellow set in the gray grandeur of the mountains. Vast plantations of pineapples dotted the hills, and as they passed through they could see the spiky heads of the fruit lying in even rows in the brown earth. Fruit trees abounded about the homes of the plantation dwellers, and even barnyard stock could be seen lolling indolently behind the buildings. Everywhere was color, blended with a perfection that defied the efforts of artists who tried to reproduce it on canvas. The sightseers were held spellbound by this unequalled display of Nature's handiwork.

But the time set for their return was rapidly approaching, and they journeyed back to the city and to the quay where a small boat awaited them to convey them to the *Empress*. Smoke was already pouring from her funnels, and not long after they were safely aboard the anchors were hoisted, and the steamer moved slowly down the bay. Gradually the city dwindled to the size of a miniature, toy-like



group of buildings, and then it was no more. Only the mountains remained in view, and they, too, were soon swallowed up in the mist on the horizon.

On ship *Rex* and his friends were once more devoting their minds to the problem of the Grinning Ghost. There was one other mystery that still remained unsolved. Where had the Inspector hidden the ruby? All of them had been searched at one time or another, and their luggage had been opened several times. Certainly the astute Inspector must have employed considerable ingenuity in hiding the gem. Try as they might, none of the three were able to suggest a reasonable location for the "Tear of Blood," and yet here they were, bound for India to restore the idol's lost ruby. The cache containing the stone would probably remain undisclosed until they were ready to present the worshippers with this token from England.

Rex and George talked over the possibility of further trouble. Perhaps the Baron and his aids were not the only ones who were interested in obtaining the bloody jewel. Rex spoke of his suspicions of Lawrence and John-

son, but now in the tone of one who no longer considered them as possible thieves.

"I heard them talking together one night," he explained, "and it sure sounded as though they were after our prize. Johnson said something about getting 'it' sooner or later, and naturally I thought of what that 'it' might refer to the ruby. Now it seems as though I was wrong."

"Probably something very simple," George suggested. "Why don't you ask them?"

"That would be very embarrassing, don't you think?" Rex said.

"Well," the young Englishman reflected. "You may have an opportunity of asking them some time when it won't seem so pointed a remark."

This appeared to be a logical conclusion, and Rex dismissed the subject from his thoughts. If there was any one else on the ship who wanted the ruby, he thought, he'd have to show himself sooner or later. He wasn't going to fret himself about it.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE "TEAR OF BLOOD" RESTORED

BUT the days passed, and nothing came to disturb the pleasant nature of the journey. Rex's hand remained in its cast, but the doctor assured him that it would not be for long. The excitement of the first part of the trip became a horror laden memory that was only recalled when mention of the ruby was made. One or two rough days were encountered on the voyage to Yokohama, but they lacked the fury of that one deadly storm that had been the setting for the adventure with the Japanese Baron. The Baron himself remained silent in his lonely cell, and occasionally a sailor would report to the Captain that he had noticed the yellow man moving his lips as though talking to himself.

The life aboard the boat was enlivened by several impromptu parties and a masquerade. Butterball, as was his wont, delighted and

amused the assembled guests at this affair by appearing as Cupid, even down to the bow and arrow. Thus the hours fled by, and the *Empress* docked at Yokohama with a list of merry passengers almost reluctant to leave the ship.

A cablegram awaited the Inspector. It was dated from London, and was in code. He took it to the rooms they had taken in a large hotel, and locked himself in to decipher it. The boys were anxious to stretch their legs, and wandered about the foreign city, examining with interest the sights that it afforded. They found that this Japanese metropolis had absorbed much of Western civilization. There were street cars clanging about the streets, and motor buses, too. Many of the buildings, while not as tall as those in America, showed the influence of American architecture. The residents of the city were dressed chiefly in clothing familiar to Americans, for they were anxious to exhibit their desire to ape their Occidental brothers. But, and here was an odd fact, the boys learned from an American naval officer whom they met in the hotel, that the Jap removes his Western clothing as soon

as he is in his own home, and dons the dress of his forefathers.

Despite the profusion of automobiles that cluttered up the city streets, there were still to be seen the famed "jinrickshaws," two wheeled carriages drawn by a man. The boys hired one of these, and were rolled about the city until it was time to return to the hotel. They were sailing on the morrow in one of the small coastwise steamers that journey from Japan to China and thence down the coast to the Yellow Sea. The party was to go as far as Hongkong, the English island community on the southern coast, where they would board yet another steamer that was to leave them at Singapore on the tip of the Malay Peninsula.

Upon returning to the hotel they found the Inspector ready with the deciphered message. It was long, and quite informative, clearing up considerably the mystery surrounding the Baron. That gentleman, because of his rank, had been handed over to high Japanese officials who were to consider the charges made by the Captain of the *Empress*.

The following message had been dispatched

from the British Foreign Office, directed to Mr. "Thomas" in care of the British Legation, Yokohama:

HAYAKA BELIEVED TO BE MENTALLY UNBALANCED STOP WAS RECALLED AT OUR SUGGESTION STOP IS THOUGHT TO BE INVOLVED IN SCHEME FOR SECURING PORTION OF NORTHERN INDIA FOR OVERFLOW POPULATION OF HIS COUNTRY STOP NATIVES ARE FRIENDLY TO JAPANESE MISSIONARIES HE ASSERTS STOP THIS PLAN NOT ACCREDITED BY JAPANESE GOVERNMENT STOP DOCTORS IN LONDON ARE CONVINCED THAT FIRST STATEMENT IS TRUE STOP MAY BE DANGEROUS STOP

"Well," said the Inspector after the boys had perused this strange message, "that makes things quite clear. We were dealing with a mad fanatic who was operating without the sanction of his government. I suppose he had the idea that certain Indian provinces would free themselves of our control, and allow Japan to send her excess population into their lands. He must have heard of the plan for the restoration of the ruby through some spy system, and as he had been recalled anyway, was all set on stealing the stone. He went

to Paris, and rooted about until he found this man Berand, known as the 'Alley Cat.' Berand spoke perfect English, and the Jap hired him to come to America to follow George and me. He also worked with the man, as witness the scene in my friend's Cole's library. In Chicago this 'Alley Cat' had friends as we have seen and he enlisted the aid of the man we caught on the ship. It seems very simple now. Probably the 'Alley Cat' was to keep the stone in return for his services. He was playing for high stakes, and paid for his failure with his life. I shall take steps this evening to inform the proper authorities of this message."

"It looks as though the tangle has been straightened out," Rex said, "but would you tell us where the ruby is?"

The Inspector laughed. "You'll find out in due time, my lads, and I can't tell you now."

Thus the boys had to curb their curiosity, knowing that the Inspector was unable to give them any further explanation.

In the lobby of the hotel Rex ran across Mr. Johnson, who was stopping there prior

to visiting the interior. The man was pleased to see the boy, and the two began to talk of the wonders of this strange land. Johnson was thoroughly acquainted with the country, for in his capacity as an importing merchant he had often visited it. Now he enlarged upon many of the things that Rex had already noticed. For many minutes he held the lad's attention, until at last he was forced to leave to meet his wife.

"You know," he concluded, "the Japs are a very shrewd race. They're clever politicians and clever business men. When you strike a bargain with a Jap, nine times out of ten you'll find that he's managed to get the edge on you. I'm up to their practices, but even so I'm often the loser. Came over here to try to get the exclusive agency for a new material that they've perfected for clothing. My firm is anxious to handle this fabric for there's lots of money in it, but so far we've been unable to get the concession. But I'm going to come to terms with the manufacturers if it's the last thing I do. We'll get that agency before I leave, or my name isn't James Johnson." He left the boy with the fond hope that the bal-



ance of his travels would be exceedingly enjoyable. "Be careful of your hand," he cautioned, and then, "I've often wondered how you hurt it. It looks as though all of you people were being damaged in some way or another."

Rex smiled to himself after the man had gone. So that was the "it" that Johnson was discussing with Lawrence that night. An agency! Well, that certainly was a far cry from a ruby. He laughed aloud, and several of the guests paused to stare at him. Abruptly he fled to the privacy of his room, there to tell George and Butterball of his discovery.

"Just goes to show how misleading circumstances can be," he said. "I was all ready to believe that Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and Hilary Lawrence were mixed up in this affair. I'm glad there was no truth in it."

That night the four celebrated. They went to a Japanese playhouse and witnessed one of the peculiar productions that are staged for the edification of the citizens of Yokohama. To their American and English minds the play was incomprehensible, for it consisted of nothing more than a series of sym-

bolie dances and wild gesturing, accompanied by a sort of music such as they had never heard. The whole drama seemed to represent the squealings of a litter of suckling pigs. All female characters were acted by males and their oddly pitched, monotonous voices grated upon foreign ears. The elaborate costumes and masks that they wore were beautiful to behold, but the actions of the actors were nothing less than absurd to the strangers in the theatre. Rex saw Hilary Lawrence in the audience and waved to him. The great American actor waved back, wrinkling up his nose as he pointed to the stage. Here was a kind of his art which did not please him, but it was only because he could not understand it. Even as the boys were watching the weird spectacle, a famous Oriental actor was attempting to entrance an American audience in New York City . . . the renowned Mei Lang Fang.<sup>5</sup>

After the theatre, which they left early (the play appeared to continue for ages) the tired travelers repaired to their beds in the hotel. Before going to sleep, however, the Inspector

<sup>5</sup>Mr. Mei Lang Fang appeared on the New York stage in 1930. He was hailed as the greatest Oriental actor of his day.

amused them with stories of the Japanese custom known as hara-kiri.

"It is not practiced any more," he explained, "but it was for ages. The custom was the only means of avenging an insult, and to us it seems ridiculous. When a Japanese man was insulted by his neighbor, the supreme form of vengeance was for him to kill himself on the insulter's doorstep. This meant social ostracism for the family of the insulter and vindication for the family of the deceased. Hara-kiri was always committed with a swordlike knife that was a family heirloom, passing down from generation to generation. The Japs have a miraculous self control, and they would slit their stomachs and watch themselves bleed to death.

"The last time that this form of suicide was practiced in Japan, was immediately following the famous Lansing treaty. A fanatical Jap who believed that the United States had taken advantage of his own nation, killed himself on the steps of the American legation.<sup>6</sup>

"You see," he added in conclusion, "the

<sup>6</sup>This authentic story was related to the writer by a prominent authority on Japanese History.

ancient Jap believed that he could never ascend to the Japanese heaven unless he wiped out in this manner the insult cast upon him."

The boys were awe stricken at this relation of former conditions. Still, they illustrated the indomitable courage of this marvelous people. Their dreams that night were haunted by visions of Japanese martyrs slicing themselves all over the place.

Next day they embarked for Hongkong on the tiny steamer, *Prince of Pao-Lung*. It was not for nearly two months, after a journey that was replete with wonderful sights and strange vistas of Oriental life in all its phases, that the boys reached the end of their journey to the far North of India in the little town of Banoon where Kal, the mighty, was enshrined. They arrived, tired and dusty from the long trip through India, a day before the Festival of the Idol. English officials had made the dangerous journey with them, but there was little of the anti-British sentiment noticeable in the natives, for they had been informed through mysterious channels that the visitors were bringing back the stolen "Tear of Blood."

They had their first view of the temple upon the evening of their appearance in the town, a tiny, carven shrine within which sat the wooden image that had caused so much trouble.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CRIMSON TEAR RESTORED

DAWN in the little village was heralded by a great bustling and hubbub of the hundreds of peasants who had flocked to the shrine for the celebration. The white visitors were astir early, eager for the presentation ceremony. George, Lord Berkeley, who was to make the presentation, was visited by two shriveled old priests, who handed him gorgeous robes of gold-encrusted cloth to wear over his khaki traveling suit. He tried them on in the presence of his friends, and blushed confusedly when they commented on his appearance. Butterball, who, throughout the trip had been writing his articles for the newspaper, was busy typing a lengthy description of the young Englishman in his flowing, priestly robes.

Rex had been watching the Inspector, wondering when the man would produce the gem,

but the detective made no sign that he was ready. His eyes were glistening. Obviously he was as much thrilled at the dénouement to come as were the boys.

The morning passed, filled with the odd sounds of the steadily increasing number of worshippers. From every distant region they came, bringing gifts to be placed within the shrine. Some of them performed strange dances in the square of the hamlet. Their violent movements kept time with the incessant beating of huge, skin-covered drums. Rex felt his blood tingle as this scene of religious enthusiasm penetrated to the marrow of his bones, but above all was his keen desire to see the ruby.

When the sun had reached a point directly above them in the heavens the beating of the drums was silenced, and the dancers ceased their pagan activities. A dead stillness fell upon the throng of natives. The ceremony would soon take place.

Quietly a select body of native nobility and priests filed into the temple. An escort, arrayed in fantastic headdress and multi-colored garments came to the hut in which the white

men had passed the night. They indicated that the visitors were to follow them into the shrine, and an English official whispered that this was the first time that white men were to be allowed to take part in the festival.

Rex, Butterball, George, the Inspector, and the rest solemnly walked behind the escort. The air was heavy with the odor of incense, mingled with the sweaty smells of the perspiring natives.

They entered the temple, and stood in a semicircle close to the altar and beyond the restricted group of the nobles. The throng outside was struggling to look through the open gates. They surged back and forth, but no sound escaped their lips.

A priest, venerable and old, mounted the steps of the altar. He commenced a subdued incantation, weaving his hands about before the strange idol. Rex noticed the hole in one wooden cheek where the missing stone had been.

The incantation continued, and the priest's voice rose in a song-like fervor. He was begging forgiveness of the God, perhaps, for this long delay. Now another took the first one's



place, and went on with the mumbled prayers. He was followed by another, and then another. The visitors were becoming cramped, as the hours passed. Their spines felt as though they would break any moment. At last the prayers were concluded, and the first priest took his position at the top of the altar steps. He looked out over the throng, and then spoke to them in an unknown tongue. After a brief pause, following this speech, he beckoned to George who fearfully mounted the steps.

Rex's brain was whirling. Had George possessed the stone all this time. If so, where on earth had it been concealed. He couldn't believe it possible. The Englishman had appeared as much in the dark as every one else. But he might have been acting. Still *where had he hidden the stone?*

Then a deep voice spoke out from the men surrounding Rex. It was the Inspector's:

"Smythe!" he called, and to the wonder of every one a shoddy, unkempt, nut brown peasant forced his way through the throng at the door and dragged his ragged self before the Inspector.

"Right ho!" said this beggarly native, and

drew a leather bag from his tattered skirt. This he handed to MacAndrews, who in turn gave it to George. The latter opened the bag, tilted its contents into his palm, and showed it to the priest. The ruby! He then made a short speech in English which an interpreter translated to the natives from the back of the temple. And then it was all over, save for the placing of the fiery gem back in the cheek of the idol.

“Rex,” the Inspector said later when they were again in the hut, “I would like to present Major Billingsford-Smythe. Smythe, this is Rex Cole, Jr., perhaps the finest, and certainly the most able, young detective in America. Some day I’ll tell you of the clever way he snared the men who thought I was carrying the ruby.” Then he turned to Rex again.

“The Major carried the stone on his supposed around-the-world flight, you see, while I was busy giving the impression that the ruby was on my person. Billingsford-Smythe did fly half way around the globe, but he stopped in India, and disguised himself as a native. Reports of the continuation of the flight were

circulated by the authorities. A simple plan, but if I may say so, a good one. You see we're not as thick as you may think at Scotland Yard."

Later, in Calcutta waiting for the boat that was to start them on their journey home, the Inspector wrote a long letter to Mayor Cole.

And so, my dear Cole, The letter concluded: your boy showed every attribute that goes to make a winner. I'm proud of him, and know that you are, too. And as for young Thomas, he's a jolly fine chap, the salt of the earth. Soon we'll be home, (that is, the boys will be) and then I'll give you the details before sailing for England. Until then Lord Berkely and myself join hands in thanking you for allowing us to escort these two remarkable American youths. Fondly,

JOHN.

The Mayor's eyes glistened as he read this last paragraph. Good old "Mac." He was a great scout. And Rex had acquitted himself nobly. And Butterball, too. Well, well, it was a good old world.

He was glad that the boys would be returning home, for more reasons than one. First of all, he had yearned for the sight of his son, and secondly, something had come up in which Rex might be able to help him. He sighed, and re-read the letter.

THE END

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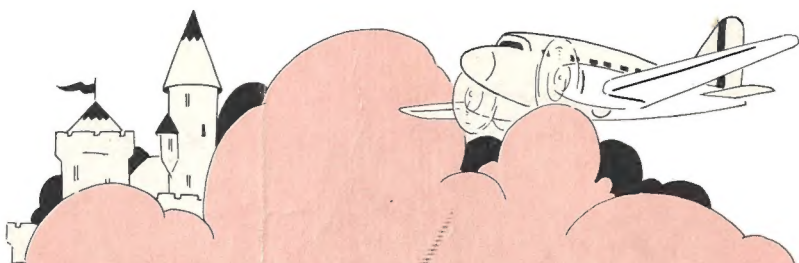
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